



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1209-2000, **Version:** A

Res. No. 1209-A

Calling upon the United States Congress to amend the Medicare legislation so that it includes coverage of the cost of hearing aids.

By Council Members Harrison, Lopez, Clarke, Dear, Malave-Dilan, Espada, Freed, Henry, Koslowitz, Marshall, Nelson, Stabile and White; also Council Members DiBrienza, Eisland, Fisher, Leffler, Linares, McCaffrey, Michels, O'Donovan, Perkins, Quinn, Abel, Eldridge, Provenzano and Cruz

Whereas, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is the single most inclusive and important law ever passed regarding equal access for people with disabilities, which includes people with hearing impairments; and

Whereas, According to the League for the Hard of Hearing, 28.6% of people age 65 and older have a measurable hearing loss, totaling 9,700,000 Medicare enrollees; and

Whereas, Hearing aids are the third most widely used assistive devices, following eye glasses and canes; and

Whereas, Untreated hearing loss may have serious emotional and social consequences for older persons, including depression, isolation, anxiety, paranoia and emotional distress; and

Whereas, According to the League for the Hard of Hearing, research estimates that 25% of older people present significant symptoms of mental health illness and that 10% of that group are actually diagnosed as mentally ill; and

Whereas, For many of those with mental health problems, hearing loss is either a precipitating or contributing factor; and

Whereas, Medicare does not cover the cost of hearing aids and this exclusion has a significant negative effect on many of the lives of the 300,000 people over the age of 65 living in New York City who suffer from hearing loss; and

Whereas, According to the League for the Hard of Hearing; (1) approximately 50% of seniors with hearing loss (totaling 4,850,000 of Medicare enrollees) are recommended to receive hearing aids by audiologists and dispensers, (2) reports of market performance indicate that 20% of such seniors (970,000) will actually purchase a hearing aid, and (3) hearing aid consumers purchase new hearing aids every 5.25 years, which means that annually 171,000 Medicare beneficiaries would benefit from expanded coverage of Medicare that includes assistive hearing devices; and

Whereas, Many advocates believe that such assistive hearing devices should be partially covered by Medicare at the rate of \$500.00 per hearing-impaired person, less any amount received as a partial benefit for hearing aids through a managed care program; and

Whereas, Congress should include sufficient funding in the national budget to pay \$500.00 to each hearing-impaired consumer covered by Medicare; and

Whereas, In taking this step of covering a portion of the total cost of hearing aids, Congress would extend the benefits of the ADA to many of those in need of help, that is, those seniors who are sufficiently hearing-impaired as to require the use of hearing aids; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Congress to amend the Medicare legislation so that it includes coverage of the cost of hearing aids.

HG
2/17/00
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