Hearing Industries Association (HIA) Applauds Introduction of Federal Legislation to Help People with Hearing Loss Get the Hearing Aids They Need

PR Newswire

The Hearing Industries Association (HIA) strongly supports the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act introduced by Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Dean Heller (R-NV). This important legislation, S.1694, is a significant step in ensuring that children and adults with hearing loss are able to obtain the hearing aids they need. Hearing loss is among America's most prevalent birth defects.

The Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act, just introduced in the 113th Congress, provides for a non-refundable $500 tax credit for the purchase of a hearing aid, or $1,000 if two are needed, once every five years.

When left unaddressed, hearing loss interferes with virtually every aspect of a person's life. For children, it affects important social, emotional, and academic development. For adults, it interferes not only with their ability to communicate and interact with others, but it affects their experiences on the job, as well as their earnings, risk for depression, and quality of life.

Numerous studies have linked untreated hearing loss to a wide range of physical and emotional conditions, including impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks, reduced alertness, irritability, negativism, anger, fatigue, tension, stress, depression, and diminished psychological and overall health. A 2013 study even suggested that hearing loss among older adults may be associated with faster rates of measurable cognitive decline.

Sadly, hearing loss remains one of the most commonly unaddressed health conditions in America today—despite the fact that the vast majority of people with hearing loss can benefit from hearing aids. Only about a quarter of the nearly 40 million people in the United States with hearing loss use hearing aids.

One of the main reasons that people do not use hearing aids to help compensate for their hearing loss is financial. In fact, as many as sixty-eight percent of people with hearing loss cite financial constraints as a core reason they do not use hearing aids.

This finding isn't surprising in light of the statistics: Thirty-three percent of those with hearing loss have incomes of less than $30,000 per year. And household incomes of people with untreated hearing loss are usually much lower than for those with normal hearing.

Beyond the Veteran's Administration, which provides hearing aids for veterans,

there is little coverage for hearing aids, which are not covered by Medicare or the vast majority of state mandated benefits. In fact, 61 percent of hearing aid purchases involve no third party payment. The entire burden of the purchase of much-needed amplification in most cases, therefore, falls on the individual trying to deal with his or her hearing loss.

The burden increases even further: A Better Hearing Institute (BHI) study found that untreated hearing loss results in a loss of income per household of up to $30,000 per year depending on the degree of hearing loss. This translates to $176 billion in unrealized income. That's an estimated cost to society of as much as $26 billion in unrealized federal taxes.

HIA commends Senators Harkin and Heller for their leadership in introducing the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act and for their commitment to helping people with hearing loss gain access to the tools they need.

Earlier in the 113th Congress, Representatives Tom Latham (R-IA) and Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), now supported by 25 other co-sponsors, introduced a similar hearing aid tax credit bill in the House, H.R.1317. They are working to have the legislation considered during this Congress.

Earlier this year, HIA members teamed up with members of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) to advance the effort to remove barriers to hearing aid technology for people with hearing loss. Combined, they met with more than 80 Senators, Representatives, and staffers during the biennial "Hearing on the Hill" fly-in. Teams from the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA), the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), and the International Hearing Society (IHS) also supported the effort by meeting with Congressional staff during "Hearing on the Hill."

For more information on the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act, visit www.hearingaidtaxcredit.org [1].

For more information on hearing loss, visit the BHI website at www.betterhearing.org [2].

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[1] http://www.hearingaidtaxcredit.org/
[2] http://www.betterhearing.org/