

May 30, 2007

SENT TO ALL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

The Honorable David Obey
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
United States House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY 2008 EHDI Appropriation

Dear Congressman Obey:

The undersigned organizations support funding of \$22 million in FY 2008 for the early hearing detection and intervention (EHDI) programs of the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) and the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Every day 33 babies are born in the United States with permanent hearing loss, making it one of the most frequently occurring birth conditions. The impact of delayed detection and intervention can last a lifetime. When hearing loss is found early, intervention can produce dramatic improvements in child speech and language development by school age. Federal seed grants to states passed in 1999 have helped bring about significant progress in state early hearing detection and intervention (EHDI) programs. But to ensure appropriate early intervention, states need greater federal assistance to help initiate appropriate screening, follow-up services and tracking programs.

In 1998, prior to this assistance, 22% of babies were reported as having received a hearing screen. Now, roughly 95% of all newborns are screened and each year there are thousands of infants with hearing loss and their families who are enjoying the benefits of early identification.

However, only just over half of those infants diagnosed with hearing loss are enrolled in an early intervention program by 6 months of age. These results validate the need for continued federal participation to help ensure that all states and U.S. territories are given the opportunity to successfully put in place comprehensive EHDI programs so that no child is left behind.

To ensure that every American newborn child has an equal chance to reach his or her full potential, the signatories to this letter urge Congress to support the following funding amounts for these critical health programs in the FY 2008 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill:

- **\$11 million** for the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program of the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) to assist states in screening, family support, follow-up and early intervention services;
- **\$11 million** for the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) under the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to assist states with the tracking, surveillance, quality assurance and cost effectiveness in EHDI programs; and
- Encourage the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) to expand its EHDI clinical research program.

Thank you for your support of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Academy of Doctors of Audiologists
Academy of Rehabilitative Audiology
Advanced Bionics Corporation (a Boston Scientific Company)
Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
American Academy of Audiology
American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Medical Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Deaf Children
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Better Hearing Institute
Cochlear Americas
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Council for Exceptional Children
Easter Seals
Educational Audiology Association
International Hearing Society
Hearing Industries Association
Hearing Loss Association of America
Med-El Corporation
National Association of Pupil Services Administrators
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of the Deaf
National Association of School Nurses
National Cued Speech Association
National Student Speech Language Hearing Association
Pediatrix Medical Group
Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

For more information, please contact James Potter at 202-431-9008.