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May 29, 2007

The Honorable Mike Ross
U.S. House of Representatives
314 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515-3225

Dear Representative Ross,

On behalf of the Florida Academy of Audiology, I would like to thank you for your devotion and your leadership on hearing health care issues and for leading the fight on promoting policies that benefit individuals with hearing loss.

Our Academy endorses the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act of 2007 (HR 1665) to provide Medicare beneficiaries with the option of going to an audiologist, directly, for hearing and balance/vestibular diagnostic evaluations. This bill would improve Medicare beneficiaries' access to hearing care without diminishing the role of medical doctors, or expanding the scope of practice for audiology.

As you already know, the Department of Veterans Affairs has allowed veterans to see an audiologist, directly, since 1992. The VA has shown that direct access to audiology services provides **quality hearing health care** (providers are either Masters level or Doctoral level...the current entry level degree is now the doctoral degree) and is **cost effective**. The Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, administered by the Office of Personnel Management, and many private health plans now allow participants in their respective health care programs direct access to audiologists as well.

The Academy appreciates your hard work promoting this important initiative in the 110th Congress. Thank you for being the champion of hearing health and for your concern and dedication to the needs to the hearing impaired and the health care professionals providing the services they need to fully function in society. Hearing health care is not only a medical issue, it is a quality of life issue.

Respectfully,

Lisa M. Almond, Au.D., FAAA
Doctor of Audiology
President, Florida Academy of Audiology