July 13, 2009

The Honorable Mike Ross
U.S. House of Representatives
2436 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Representative Ross:

On behalf of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), I write to thank you for your recent sponsorship and introduction of the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act of 2009 (H.R. 3024). The NAD enthusiastically supports this bill that would eliminate the need for Medicare patients to obtain a physician referral prior to visiting an audiologist for an exam.

We believe, as you do, that Medicare beneficiaries deserve the same access to quality hearing health care afforded to our nation’s veterans, through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as well as members of Congress and federal employees through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP). As you know, the VA has enabled veterans to directly access audiologists since 1992. The VA has demonstrated that direct access to audiology services provides high quality hearing health care that is cost effective. H.R. 3024 would provide easier and more efficient avenues for audiological evaluation and treatment for Medicare beneficiaries.

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) was established in 1880 by deaf leaders who believed in the right of the American deaf community to use sign language, to congregate on issues important to them, and to have its interests represented at the national level. These beliefs remain true to this day, with American Sign Language as a core value. As a nonprofit federation, the mission of the NAD is to preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and linguistic rights of deaf and hard of hearing Americans. The advocacy scope of the NAD is broad, covering the breadth of a lifetime and impacting future generations in the areas of early intervention, education, employment, health care, technology, telecommunications, youth leadership, and more. For more information, please visit www.nad.org.

Again, thank you for your work to improve access to quality hearing health care services by Medicare beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Nancy J. Bloch
Chief Executive Officer