



**P.O. Box 5133  
Austin, TX 78763**

[www.texasaudiology.org](http://www.texasaudiology.org)

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June 15, 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 one hundred twenty five members of the Texas Academy of Audiology, thank you for championing the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act of 2007 (HR 1665). As you've recognized, this legislation is extremely important for supporting the needs of Medicare beneficiaries with hearing disorders.

The Texas Academy of Audiology fully endorses HR 1665, which would give Medicare beneficiaries direct access to an audiologist for evaluation of their hearing and balance/vestibular problems, without requiring that the beneficiary be under the care of (or referred by) a physician or other health care practitioner. This legislation would improve, and expedite, the beneficiaries' access to hearing health care without diminishing the role of physicians or expanding the scope of practice of audiologists.

For the past 15 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has allowed veterans to see an audiologist without requiring a referral from a physician. The VA's review of this practice has shown that direct access to audiology services has provided **quality** and **cost-effective hearing health care** to patients. Other health care programs, including the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (administered by the Office of Personnel Management) and many private health plans, also allow their beneficiaries to have direct access to audiologists, as well.

The Texas Academy of Audiology appreciates your efforts in promoting this important initiative in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Thank you for recognizing the need for improving the use of available hearing health care resources in America and for spearheading momentum to improve access to care for hearing-impaired Americans.

Respectfully,

James G. Phelan, Au.D., FAAA  
Doctor of Audiology  
President, Texas Academy of Audiology