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April 23, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
413 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
154 Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Collins and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the American Academy of Audiology (AAA) — the largest organization of, by, and for audiologists — I would like express our strong opposition to any efforts to eliminate or reduce funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program.

Since its establishment by Congress in 1999, the EHDI program has played a critical role in ensuring that newborns and infants are screened for hearing loss early in life and receive timely intervention services. Hearing loss is one of the most common birth conditions, and without early detection and support, it can severely hinder a child's development — particularly in language, communication, and social skills.

Before EHDI programs, the average age of identification of a child with hearing loss was over 3 years of age. Since EHDI was implemented, the average age of identification is 3 months of age. Early access to language/communication is critical to meeting later development milestones and ultimately future earning potential of the child. EHDI has successfully built and supported a national infrastructure that allows for consistent, statewide newborn hearing screening and follow-up care.

Eliminating this program would endanger the progress we have made as a country. It would disproportionately affect underserved communities, reduce access to critical services, and ultimately lead to higher long-term educational and social costs.

As President of the AAA, I ask you to protect this critical program and allow for the distribution of previously Congressionally-allocated funds through 2027. Continued investment in early hearing detection is not just sound public health policy, it is a moral and economic imperative.

The American Academy of Audiology is dedicated to providing quality hearing and balance-care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss these concerns further, please feel free to reach out to Joanne Zurcher, MPP, VP of Government Relations & Policy at jzurcher@audiology.org. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Gaffney", followed by the text "AuD, MPH".

Patricia Gaffney, AuD, MPH
President of the American Academy of Audiology