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March 17, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the American Academy of Audiology, I respectfully request a \$20 million increase for the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) in the FY 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Hearing, balance, and communication disorders affect millions of Americans across the lifespan. Hearing loss alone is one of the most common health conditions in the United States, affecting individuals from infancy through older adulthood.

The NIDCD, within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is the leading federal agency supporting research on hearing and communication disorders. NIDCD-funded research has advanced early detection, cochlear implants, hearing aids, and therapies that improve speech and language outcomes.

However, NIDCD funding remained essentially flat in FY 2026 at \$534.3 million. This lack of growth limits the Institute's ability to keep pace with scientific opportunity, support new investigators, and translate discoveries into clinical care.

For FY 2027, a \$20 million increase is needed to restore momentum and expand critical research. Additional funding would support priorities including inner ear protection and regeneration, central auditory system research, improved hearing and communication technologies, prevention and treatment of hearing and balance disorders, and translational research to accelerate new diagnostics and therapies. Investments in NIDCD have already improved the lives of millions of Americans.

The Academy urges Congress to include this increase for NIDCD in the FY 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. Sustained funding growth is essential to advancing medical innovation and meeting the needs of individuals with hearing and communication disorders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Zapala".

David Zapala, PhD