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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0916

July 25, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell:

Before the Senate adjourns for its August recess, I urge you to approve House-passed legislation to make hearing aids more affordable for millions of Americans.

Nearly 50 million people have some degree of hearing loss – more than diabetes, cancer or vision impairment. The impact of hearing loss, particularly among seniors, can lead to isolation and other health problems including anxiety and depression.

Buying a hearing aid is a complex and costly process. In most cases, consumers can only buy hearing aids from audiologists or licensed hearing aid sellers after a formal medical evaluation. Because the aids are not covered by Medicare or most private insurance plans, out-of-pocket costs for a pair of hearing aids average \$5,400.

The U.S. House recently passed legislation I co-sponsored to reduce the cost of hearing aids by allowing people with mild to moderate hearing loss to purchase devices without a doctor's prescription. The *Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act*, which was included in the *FDA Reauthorization Act of 2017*, could lower the cost of a pair of hearing aids from several thousand dollars to only a few hundred dollars, according to the New York Times.

Moreover, in a study published earlier this month, researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine have found that hearing aids purchased over the counter perform essentially the same as prescription hearing aids.

Let's help reopen the world to seniors and others who struggle to hear everyday conversations with their family and friends. Washington dysfunction must not get in the way of passing this life-improving proposal. I urge swift Senate approval of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

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