



April 21, 2017

The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy, III
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kennedy, Blackburn and Carter:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to endorse H. R. 1652, the "Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017," which you introduced.

Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic health condition facing older adults. Yet 70 percent of Americans between age 65 and 84 with hearing loss are not using hearing aids because Medicare does not cover them, and paying for the devices out-of-pocket is expensive. In a recent study, *Consumer Reports* found that where the wholesale price of the aids could be verified, the average retail markup was 117 percent. The cost is high because a small group of companies control the hearing aid market, and many health care professionals who sell the devices bundle their costs in the final price paid by consumers. Better access to more affordable over-the-counter (OTC) devices could be helpful to individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss. Your bill, the "Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017," would encourage the development of these devices by requiring that the Food and Drug Administration provide for the regulation of OTC hearing aids within three years of enactment of the bill.

Medicare should cover hearing aids. Until that happens, seniors will need more affordable options to treat hearing loss. Your bill fills this gap. For that reason, the National Committee supports the "Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017," and we look forward to working with you towards enactment of this needed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Richtman".

Max Richtman
President and CEO