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POSITION PAPER

The National Academies (NASEM) Report

Synopsis: On June 2, 2016, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released its historic report on *Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Access and Affordability*. The report emphasizes that hearing loss is a major public health concern and provides 12 recommendations to improve hearing health care. HLAA strongly supports those recommendations and is working to achieve their implementation.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) is an independent, non-governmental organization that advises the nation on issues related to science and technology. In 2015, it convened a committee to study the affordability and accessibility of hearing health care for adults in the United States. Chaired by Dr. Dan Blazer, the Accessible and Affordable Hearing Health Care Committee consisted of 17 distinguished members from a diverse range of fields. HLAA was the only consumer-group sponsor of the study, serving alongside the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies.

The release of the Committee's report, [*Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability*](#), in June 2016 was a watershed moment for people with hearing loss. The report confirms what HLAA and its members have believed for decades: that hearing loss is a significant public health concern with far-reaching implications for millions of Americans, their families, and society as a whole. Yet, the Committee found that 67 to 86 percent of people who might benefit from hearing aids and other assistive technologies do not use them. High cost, lack of insurance coverage, the stigma associated with wearing hearing aids, and limited awareness of the available options are cited as common barriers to accessing hearing health care.

The report sets forth [12 recommendations](#) for “key institutional, technological, and regulatory changes that would enable consumers to find and fully use the appropriate, affordable, and high-quality services, technologies, and supports they need.” Those recommendations include implementing a new FDA device category for over-the-counter wearable devices (Recommendation 7); improving the affordability of hearing health care by, among other things, expanding insurance coverage and improving fee transparency (Recommendation 9); and educating consumers by strengthening publicly available, evidenced-based information on hearing loss and hearing health care (Recommendation 11).



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HLAA strongly supports the recommendations outlined in the report, which accurately reflect the needs, concerns, and frustrations that many consumers face when making hearing health care decisions, including whether to seek treatment at all. Consistent with HLAA's mission, those recommendations emphasize that the individual with hearing loss—the consumer—should be the primary focus in the provision of hearing health care.

HLAA is committed to achieving the implementation of the recommendations in the report. With the enactment of the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act in 2017, which HLAA supported, some of those recommendations are becoming reality. HLAA, in particular, is taking the lead in implementing Recommendation 11, which focuses on consumer education.

HLAA will continue to work with its fellow co-sponsors and other stakeholders to make hearing health care more accessible and affordable for all consumers.

Adopted February 2018, to be reconsidered February 2021.