



# HLAA Advocacy Roundup for 2023: *What HLAA is Doing for You*

BY LISE HAMLIN

**H**HLAA's advocacy department works toward equal communication access that will benefit 48 million people with hearing loss across the country. It's a monumental task to provide accommodations for millions! Even if every one of us had the same hearing loss, the same communication needs, preferences, priorities and lifestyles—it would be a huge lift. But, as HLAA members know well, hearing loss is unique to each individual. Throw in different styles of communication access needs, different demands in our lives, and a sliding scale of preferences, and you have a seemingly insurmountable goal.

Still, communication access for all is our goal. So, how do we achieve such a tall task? It takes patience and a strong, steady presence making inroads over time, to make sure that all 48 million of us are not left out.

HLAA's advocacy department focuses on projects that have the potential to make the biggest impact on as many people with hearing loss as possible. We focus on ensuring accessible technology is available and affordable to people with different degrees of hearing loss. Whether it's over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids for those with mild to moderate hearing loss, large area listening systems, or CART/captioning in public places for people with greater hearing loss. We work on legislation that pushes access forward for captioning on television and the internet. And we join advisory boards and coalitions that help industry and federal agencies understand the need for hearing aid compatible phones, captioned phones, access at the airport and in emergency situations.

Each year we must make choices regarding the projects we take on—boiling the ocean is not an option. At the same time, we must also be nimble and recognize when we must change direction to confront immediate needs. For example, when the COVID 19 pandemic hit, we immediately pivoted to provide information and education to people with hearing loss who were faced with new and sometimes fraught communication challenges. We met the challenge. We helped

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HLAA Director of Public Policy Lise Hamlin speaks on the Hearing Aid Compatibility Task Force panel at 2023 CTIA Forum.



Hamlin speaks on a panel at the TDI Biennial Conference, July 2023.

mitigate immediate problems at the same time paving the way for the work to be done for greater access in the future. For example, our work on teleconferencing will have an impact far beyond the pandemic. And you know those clear window accessible masks? My dentist still uses them.

Here's a snapshot of what we're working on for you:

- **Videoconferencing Platforms.** We worked with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) to recommend, among other things, requiring captioning on all videoconferencing platforms. New rules requiring accessible videoconferencing platforms go into effect September 3, 2024.
- **Telehealth.** HLAA has fought to make all telehealth platforms accessible with captioning—either live or built-in—available to people with hearing loss.
- **HAC Wireless Phones.** We're working with the FCC, cellphone manufacturers, service providers, researchers, members of the hearing aid industry and other consumer groups to ensure all cellphones are hearing aid compatible (HAC).
- **Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS).** We are working with industry, researchers and consumers to develop recommendations for the FCC on metrics and measures for quality standards for captioned telephones.
- **OTC hearing aids.** HLAA was the one consumer organization supporting legislation bringing over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids to the market. We also provided comments to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from the consumer perspective on OTC hearing aids. We continue to provide consumer information to the FDA as the market plays out.
- We also support legislation that moves the ball forward on access including:
  - Communication Video and Technology Accessibility (CVTA) Act, introduced by Senator Ed Markey and Representative Anna Eshoo.
  - Disability and Age Jury Service Discrimination Prohibition Act, Senator Markey.
  - Air Carrier Access Amendments (ACAA) Act, S. 545, Senator Tammy Baldwin and H.R. 1267, Representative Dina Titus.
  - Medicare Hearing Aid Coverage Act of 2023, H.R. 244, Representative Debbie Dingle.
  - Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act, Senator Tammy Duckworth.
  - Ally's Act, S.1135, Senator Shelley Moore Capito and H.R.2439, Representative Joe Neguse.



HLAA Executive Director Barbara Kelley, Qais Khan of the Cochlear Implant International Community of Action (CIICA) and Hamlin at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Cochlear Center Research Day, April 28, 2023.

We also sit on boards and advisory councils that provide private industry and public regulators to ensure that the millions of people with hearing loss are not forgotten. Read more in Executive Director Barbara Kelley's column, A Seat at Many Tables on page 8. **HL**

*As HLAA's director of public policy, Lise Hamlin, a cochlear implant user, has been an advocate for people with hearing loss for three decades. She works directly with consumers to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and other disability laws like the Air Carrier Access Act. Lise also represents HLAA on federal advisory committees, industry advisory groups, and consumer coalitions, including the Federal Communications Commission's Disability Advisory Committee, Transportation Security Administration's Disability and Medical Condition Coalition and other organizations, advocating legislation that supports the rights of millions of Americans with hearing loss. Email Lise at [lhamlin@hearingloss.org](mailto:lhamlin@hearingloss.org).*

To learn more about our ongoing advocacy efforts, and how you can get involved, visit our Know Your Rights page at [bit.ly/3RYShBI](https://bit.ly/3RYShBI) or scan the QR code at right:

