

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ALLIANCE

Alexander Graham Bell
Association for the Deaf and Hard
of Hearing

American Academy of Audiology

American Academy of
Otolaryngology-Head and Neck
Surgery

American Cochlear Implant
Alliance

American Society for Deaf
Children

American Speech-Language-
Hearing Association

Council of American Instructors
of the Deaf

Directors of Speech and Hearing
Programs in State Health and
Welfare Agencies

Hands & Voices

Hearing Health Foundation

Hearing Loss Association of
America

International Hearing Society

National Court Reporters
Association

National Cued Speech
Association

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July 21, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Rm 428
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Bldg., Rm 835
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Requesting Mark-Up of S. 2424, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act

Dear Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The undersigned members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA) strongly urge the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions to **schedule the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act (S. 2424) reauthorization for markup** as soon as Congress returns in September.

The DHHA is a coalition of consumer and professional organizations that advocate for federal public policies and programs that will improve the quality of life for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, all people with hearing loss, and their support networks. As such, our member organizations support and understand the critical significance of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Programs.

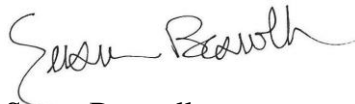
If enacted, S. 2424 would reauthorize EHDI grants, which currently fund state-wide programs that screen newborns for hearing loss before they leave the hospital. Additionally, the legislation would foster early intervention and family support programs that aim to ensure that parents of young children with hearing loss can gain access to early intervention services they need, such as hearing aids and other hearing assistive technologies, language development, and auditory training.

Research has shown that the **early intervention of hearing loss is critical for children** to learn language and develop literacy, providing a pathway for success in their educational and life endeavors. Early detection of hearing loss can dramatically better one's chance to experience a greater number of life opportunities - professionally, academically, and socially. **Furthermore, early detection and intervention of hearing loss has proven to be one of the most cost-effective interventions in health care.**

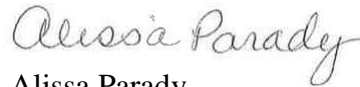
We, DHHA, urge your Committee to consider, and pass, S. 2424 as soon as possible. Companion legislation, H.R. 1344, was passed (via voice vote) by the U.S. House of Representatives on September 8, 2015. The previous reauthorization of the program passed the Senate in 2010 by an amendment of unanimous consent. We hope your timely consideration of S. 2424 will enable a similar pathway for passage this year. S. 2424 was introduced by Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) and has bipartisan support.

Although great strides have been made, significant work remains to be done to ensure that infants and children with hearing loss receive timely and appropriate services. **Continued federal funding is necessary to ensure that state EHDI programs remain fully operational and successful so they properly link screening programs with diagnosis and early intervention.** DHHA urges swift action to reauthorize this critical program.

Sincerely,



Susan Boswell
Co-Chair



Alissa Parady
Co-Chair

cc: Members of the Senate HELP Committee