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**McCARTHY REINTRODUCES HEARING AID TAX CREDIT
WITH RECORD SUPPORT FROM 37 REPRESENTATIVES**

WASHINGTON, DC, March 19, 2009 — Representative Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) today reintroduced the bipartisan Hearing Aid Tax Credit (H.R. 1646) along with Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) and a record number of original co-sponsors, including 8 members of the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill, with the addition of a \$200,000/year income eligibility cap, is otherwise unchanged from legislation in the 110th Congress that attracted 112 co-sponsors by the end of the session.

The Hearing Aid Tax Credit would provide assistance to many of the 32 million people who need hearing aids to treat their hearing loss. Medicare expressly excludes coverage of hearing aids as do most private insurance policies, and as a result, cost is cited as a prohibitive factor by two thirds of the people who do not treat their hearing loss. If enacted, H.R. 1646 would provide a \$500 tax credit per hearing aid for children and people age 55 and older. While hearing aids can treat 95% of all hearing losses, only 22% of those who could benefit from them actually use them.

HIA's Chairman, Jerry Ruzicka, points out that that "untreated hearing loss affects everything from sociability to earning potential – and for far too long, the need for financial assistance for people who need hearing aids has gone unaddressed. HIA has brought together manufacturers, professionals, and the consumers who depend on our technology, and we all agree that a tax credit for hearing aid purchases is the best way to improve access."

The Hearing Aid Tax Credit is actively supported by hearing health organizations including the Alexander Graham Bell Assn for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell), Hearing Loss Assn of America (HLAA), Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA), American Academy of Audiology (AAA), American Speech Language Hearing Assn (ASHA), International Hearing Society (IHS) and Hearing Industries Association (HIA).

The hearing health community has worked as a coalition to focus Congressional attention on the importance of hearing health and the burdens associated with the lack of financial assistance for treatment. In addition to coalition efforts on Capitol Hill, HIA has sponsored local AG Bell, HLAA and IHS chapters that have hosted events for Representatives in their districts to demonstrate the importance of this legislation to voters. Events have been held in Napa, CA for Rep. Mike Thompson; Las Vegas for Rep. Shelley Berkley; Midland, MI for Rep. Dave Camp; and Maryland for Rep. Chris Van Hollen, among many others. Next week (Saturday, March 28) the Pennsylvania chapters of HLAA, AG Bell and IHS will host an HIA-sponsored brunch for Rep. Allyson Schwartz in suburban Philadelphia to thank her for her support of the tax credit. More than 150 people are expected to attend.

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In addition, this legislation has attracted dramatic grassroots attention, motivating Americans across the nation to send more than 25,000 emails and letters to their elected Members of Congress in 2008 by visiting <http://www.hearingaidtaxcredit.org/>. Ruzicka notes that "hearing loss is an issue that affects millions of people, and this legislation could have a great impact on their ability to afford hearing aid treatment - we are honored that so many Representatives have recognized this fact and have lent this cause record support."

HIA, headquartered in Washington, DC, is the national trade association of manufacturers of hearing aids, implantable hearing devices, assistive listening devices, component parts and power sources for amplification devices. Visit <http://www.hearingaidtaxcredit.org/> for information about the bill, or contact Andy Bopp, abopp@bostrom.com.

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