

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and its more than 14,000 audiology members, I am speaking with grave concern and in opposition to the PCAST recommendations that focus narrowly on the price of a hearing aid. This narrow focus does not represent cost-effective, evidence-based practice of hearing health care.

A hearing aid alone is not enough to overcome a hearing disability. Treatment for hearing loss – even mild to moderate loss – is complex, *particularly among seniors*. Audiologists provide an individualized assessment of a person’s hearing **needs** that goes well beyond a measure of pure tone sensitivity. This includes consideration of listening in background noise, specific tests of middle ear and inner ear function, and the important cognitive and psychological factors that impact a person’s ability to use a hearing aid.

The Council made a common but serious error in assuming that hearing is analogous to vision. A misconception that was evident in the PCAST report is that amplification alone will enable a person with hearing loss to hear and understand fully in the same manner that glasses can restore vision. Even the most advanced hearing aids cannot restore hearing to 100% in the same way that prescriptive glasses, or even some over-the-counter “readers” can provide 20/20 vision. A hearing aid makes sounds louder, but not necessarily clearer and will not restore normal hearing function. A hearing aid alone cannot address the consumer’s hearing **DISABILITY**. It is the audiologist who has the focus on your parent’s or grandparent’s needs to hear and communicate at work and with family and friends. It is the audiologist, with scientific, evidence-based methods of evaluation and rehabilitative treatment, who will **ensure** that the consumer - (and that could be you) - gets **value** and **benefit** from a device that is used to amplify sound.

We respectfully request that this Council takes a view that addresses hearing *disability*, rather than focus simply on the cost of an amplification device. The Council should make recommendations that consider evidence-based hearing health care practices that will improve affordable access to these services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement.

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