

January 27, 2020

Councilmember Vincent Gray
Chair, Committee on Health
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairperson Gray,

The Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC) is the largest medical organization representing metropolitan Washington physicians in the District. We advocate on behalf of all 11,000 plus licensed physicians in the District and seek to make the District “the best place to practice medicine”.

We thank you for convening a hearing on B23-565, the Hearing Aid Sales Amendment Act of 2019. As representatives of the District’s physicians, we support the idea of physicians being the center of a patient’s care team. B23-565 makes it easier for adults to obtain a hearing aid by permitting any physician, and not just an otolaryngologist, to give clearance for a hearing aid fitting. This allows residents to see their primary care physician rather than a specialist to obtain important medical devices that make their lives easier.

I wanted to clarify a few points made on the legislation based on some concerns we have heard on the legislation. First, we agree on the value of audiologists to hearing impaired patients and the process of obtaining a hearing aid. However, it is essential that a physician be involved in the process because of their knowledge of a patient’s whole health. Physicians have extensive medical training on the human body, and have holistic intensive training on how physical conditions relate to whole health. Even in cases of routine fitting of hearing aids, routine exams by a physician are important to ensure health issues with the ear or auditory canal are not tied to further physical issues. It is not unreasonable to ask a patient to ensure the treatment they seek meets their physical need.

Second, I have heard the complaint that some specialist physicians as being too busy to do routine checks for hearing aid clearance. The bill addresses this by allowing adults to receive clearance from any physician, including their primary care physician. This allows flexibility to see a physician that knows and understands a patient’s medical history if that would be more appropriate.

MSDC is happy to offer a medical perspective to your office and the Council. Please reach out to the MSDC office if I or our membership can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Robert Hay Jr., CAE
Executive Vice President