

## **International Hearing Society Position Statement on the Taxation of Hearing Aids**

The International Hearing Society (IHS) believes that hearing aids should be exempt from taxation at the federal, state, and local level. Hearing loss is a major health problem in America, affecting over 30 million people. Current technology is extremely effective, yet only approximately 6 million people now take advantage of it. As a society, we must do all we can to enable people to benefit from this wonderful technology.

The overwhelming majority of states do not tax hearing aids at any level. In fact, the state of Georgia in 2010 repealed its tax on hearing aids. Federal law mirrors most state laws by not taxing hearing aids. The 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act specifically exempts hearing aids, which are an FDA-regulated, Class 1 medical device, from its 2.3% medical device excise tax.

The main reason hearing aids are not taxed is that hearing aids are an out-of-pocket expense for most consumers, unlike devices used by doctors or in hospitals. Additionally, the majority of insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover hearing aids. For various reasons, not the least of which is cost, only about 20% of people who could benefit from hearing aids are currently wearing them.

As healthcare costs skyrocket, consumers should not be saddled with a tax on devices which are already difficult for them to afford. To tax hearing aids would only further impede hearing-impaired consumers from getting the help they need.

*Approved by the Board of Governors on April 21, 2012.*