

Long Island
Hearing & Speech
Society, Inc.

To Jennifer -
Pls. respond for me

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

9 May 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FIRST LADY

FROM: HAROLD ICKES (H)

SUBJECT: Long Island Hearing and Speech Society, Inc.

Attached is a copy of a 24 February 1994 letter to you from Jonathan W. Leigh, of the Long Island Hearing and Speech Society, Inc. raising a very serious concern that apparently "hearing aids" are not included in overall coverage under S. 1757. I've asked Ira and Greg Lawler to look into this.

cc: Jonathan W. Leigh
Long Island Hearing and
Speech Society, Inc.
430 Lakeville Road
New Hyde Park, New York 11040

Janice -

Kevin Thurm will
send Harold and HRC
copies of his response.

Jen



Associated with
Long Island Jewish Medical Center,
The Long Island Campus for the
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Long Island Hearing and Speech Society, Inc.

430 Lakeville Road
New Hyde Park, NY 11040
Telephone (516) 437-8822

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Member Agencies
Health & Welfare Council
of Nassau County, Inc.
Long Island's United Way



February 24, 1994

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
The White House
Washington, D.C

Dear Mrs. Clinton,

The Health Security Act as it now stands will be an enormous disappointment to 28 million hearing-impaired Americans. We ask for your compassion and help. The exclusion of hearing aids in S.1757 has never been explained. It will be particularly harmful to infants and children whose parents cannot afford them.

The first six years of age are critical for learning language. Babies can now be screened at birth to identify hearing problems. Aids can be fitted at two months, enabling language development, socialization and the possibility of being mainstreamed in school - a great saving in public education expense.

Particularly distressing is the granting of coverage for eyeglasses to children under 18, while denying assistance to children who can't hear.

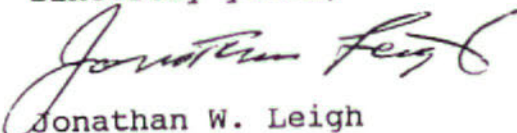
More than one in three Americans over the age of 65 are hearing-impaired. The Act provides them with "durable medical equipment and prosthetic and orthotic devices," but not hearing aids. Prescription drugs are covered. Is the prescription of a hearing aid, which lasts for years, less important? Certainly not to the patient.

Our position, shared with many other professional organizations, is that a national-health plan must include universal screening of infants, auditory prostheses, aural training, and rehabilitation for children.

For adults, we believe there should be a co-payment provision for auditory prostheses and aural rehabilitation programs.

We urge you to modify the exclusion of hearing aids now included in S. 1757.

Sincerely yours,


Jonathan W. Leigh

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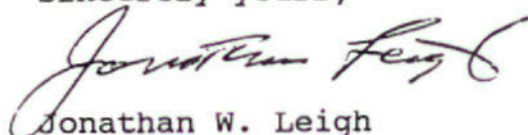
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We urge you to modify the exclusion of hearing aids now included in S. 1757.

Sincerely yours,


Jonathan W. Leigh

F

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

9 May 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR IRA MAGAZINER
GREG LAWLER

FROM: HAROLD ICKES 

SUBJECT: Long Island Hearing and Speech Society, Inc.

Attached are self-explanatory 6 May and 24 February 1994 letters to me from Jonathan W. Leigh of the Long Island Hearing and Speech Society, Inc. raising a very serious concern that "hearing aids" are specifically excluded from coverage under S. 1757. I would appreciate your either letting me know or communicating directly with Mr. Leigh as to our position regarding the inclusion of hearing aids as part of overall coverage.

cc: Jonathan W. Leigh
Long Island Hearing and
Speech Society, Inc.
430 Lakeville Road
New Hyde Park, New York 11040



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Long Island's United Way

May 6, 1994

Mr. Harold Ickes
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Harold,

Sarah Kovner said she would speak to you this week about our concern for hearing aid coverage in the health bill. I hope she was able to.

Since I imagine you never received my letter of February 22nd (copy attached), I am sending this one to your home.

I now spend most of my time working for the hearing impaired. Both my brother, sister-in-law and nephew are deaf and I too must now often wear an aid. Our Hearing and Speech Center at Long Island Jewish Hospital is one of the largest in the New York area and I've included a brochure just to give you some personal background.

On Monday, May 2nd, The President met with advocates for people with disabilities and "argued that his health care plan would empower the disabled by providing an array of new assistance to help them work and live at home". (N.Y. Times May 3). We applaud that statement.

The deaf and hearing impaired are some of our most severely disabled.

BUT, on page 91, line 21 of S.1757, hearing aids are specifically excluded from coverage for anyone of any age.

The basic inconsistency of this exclusion with the President's stated position should be corrected. I write in the hope that you are able and willing to see if this can be changed.

To pass any version of the Health Bill that specifically excludes 28 million hearing disabled Americans would be nothing short of a crime.

We ask that the exemption be removed from the language of any final version of the health bill. Hearing aids should be treated exactly like eye glasses or any other prosthetic and orthotic device. Equal and fair treatment is all we ask.

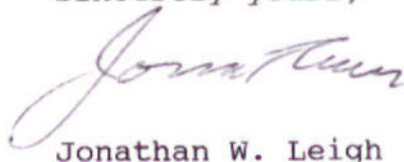


I have been talking to Sarah about this, but she says you are really the one who can do something. None of us can understand why hearing aids were excluded in the first place.

I understand that the President will address the graduating class at Gallaudet. What a wonderful forum at which to correct what seems an obvious mistake.

With best personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jonathan W. Leigh".

Jonathan W. Leigh



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Mr. Harold Ickes
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Harold,

I hope you won't object to my calling on our Saltaire connection. At the Pogrebin's recent wedding celebration, Sarah Kovner suggested that I write you about the problem we have with hearing aid coverage in the Health Security Act.

Would it be possible for you to see that the enclosed letter receives the attention of Mrs. Clinton?

I believe that this issue has not yet been recognized by the vast number of people who will be affected. With your new responsibility in coming elections, I assume that an issue of concern to 28 million Americans will have a high priority.

I know from personal experience that dramatic results can be achieved by the early fitting of hearing aids to infants and children. The tragedy of withholding these devices from those whose parents are unable to afford them is truly heart rending.

One in three adults over 65 have hearing problems. As they recognize that their needs have been left out of the Health Security Act, I think there will be deep resentment. Few things are more important to these millions.

The entire hearing-impaired community will appreciate any help you can give us.

With best wishes for success in all your many responsibilities. Their scope is truly awe inspiring.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan W. Leigh

