

## Rep. Gus Bilirakis Introduces Bill to Expand Access to Health Care

Washington, D.C. - Congressman

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HEAR Act will allow Medicare to cover hearing aids

April 19, 2007

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"We must begin a national discussion on how to help seniors afflicted with hearing loss or impairment, especially with more and more baby-boomers suffering from this condition becoming Medicare-eligible," said Bilirakis. "As an American with hearing loss, I understand all too well the frustrations associated with this condition. It makes good sense to help those who suffer from hearing impairment better afford devices, treatments, and services that will improve their quality of life."

According to the National Institutes of Health, hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults. One in three people over 60 and half of those over 85 have hearing loss. Medicare, however, is precluded from providing coverage for hearing aids. The HEAR Act repeals this prohibition and directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to determine the most appropriate manner to provide this benefit.

Bilirakis noted that hearing problems, especially among the elderly, can make it difficult to understand and follow a doctor's advice, respond to warnings and commands, and talk with friends and family, all of which can be frustrating, embarrassing, and dangerous.

"I intend to work very hard to focus the attention of Congress on this important issue and move forward the debate about helping seniors with hearing loss," Bilirakis said.

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