

February 20, 2024

The Honorable Denis Richard McDonough
Secretary, Veterans Affairs
Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Re: Reimbursement Cuts for Audiology Services in Community Care Network

Dear Secretary McDonough:

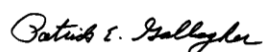
On behalf of the American Academy of Audiology (the Academy), I am reaching out to express concern regarding the significant reductions in reimbursement for audiology services to providers who participate in the Community Care Network over the past two years. The Academy is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of audiologists in all practice settings, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders.

Active military personnel and veterans are at a disproportionate risk for hearing loss and tinnitus. In 2020, more than 1.3 million veterans received disability benefits for hearing loss, and another 2.3 million filed claims linked to tinnitus. Many audiologists are pleased to provide hearing care services to veterans in their communities by participating in the Veterans Affairs Community Care Network. The Community Care Network is an invaluable tool to ensure that veterans can access critical services in a timely and convenient manner.

Reimbursement rates for virtually all audiology and audiology-related services in the Community Care Network saw significant reductions in both 2023 and again in 2024 across all regions. The currently listed rates for 2024 are significantly lower when compared to those from 2022. For example, in 2022 reimbursement for electroacoustic evaluation of a hearing aid (binaural) in Mississippi was \$179.65. In 2024, reimbursement for this service in Mississippi is \$102.37. In 2022, reimbursement for an exam and binaural selection in Alaska was \$375. In 2024, reimbursement for this service in Alaska is \$258.

The Academy is concerned that these significant reimbursement reductions, combined with the significant documentation and administrative requirements for participants in the Community Care Network, may ultimately limit the number of providers able to participate in the CCN. The Academy would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue further and to provide any additional information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Patrick Gallagher, MBA, Executive Director