



The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.  
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Occupational hearing loss is a significant public health issue affecting millions of working and retired Americans. Individuals impacted by hearing loss often experience poor communication, reduced quality of life, increased workplace safety risks, and diminished productivity. Furthermore, hearing loss is strongly associated with cognitive decline, depression, and cardiovascular conditions such as hypertension and coronary heart disease.

Hazardous noise and ototoxic chemical exposures are prevalent in the workplace. Current estimates indicate that approximately 27 million American workers are exposed to hazardous noise, 22 million to ototoxic chemicals, and 12 million to both. These figures do not include active-duty military personnel who routinely face extreme noise hazards while serving our country. In fact, hearing injuries constitute the number one reason for separation from service or re-classification to a non-noise hazardous specialty by our soldiers in combat arms. Hearing loss and tinnitus are also among the most common and costliest of VA-disability compensations.

The National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA) is a professional organization committed to preventing hearing loss and other auditory disorders caused by occupational noise and environmental exposures. NHCA's mission is to ensure that all individuals can **Hear for a Lifetime**. We work closely with stakeholders across industry, healthcare, and government to promote research, education, and policy in support of hearing conservation.

The **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)** has long served as a global leader in occupational hearing loss prevention. Unlike regulatory bodies such as OSHA, NIOSH is uniquely positioned as a research agency dedicated to developing evidence-based solutions to complex workplace health hazards. Unfortunately, **recent workforce reductions at NIOSH—nearly 60% of whom were scientific staff**—pose a serious threat to ongoing research and public health efforts.

These reductions jeopardize the availability of essential data on noise and chemical exposures, hinder research and innovation in high-risk sectors such as mining and construction, and diminish federal leadership in occupational hearing loss prevention. The long-term implications include increased preventable hearing loss among workers and a measurable decline in quality of life and workforce productivity.

NHCA respectfully urges your office to prioritize occupational health research and consider the restoration of scientific expertise at NIOSH, particularly in the field of hearing conservation. A healthy workforce is not only vital to individual well-being, but it also contributes to national productivity, safety, and economic strength.

**Sincerely,**

Sridhar Krishnamurti, PhD  
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