



Communication Access Barriers to Health Care Among Persons with Hearing Loss in North Carolina

A presentation of the North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing to the North Carolina Institute of Medicine

November 9, 2017



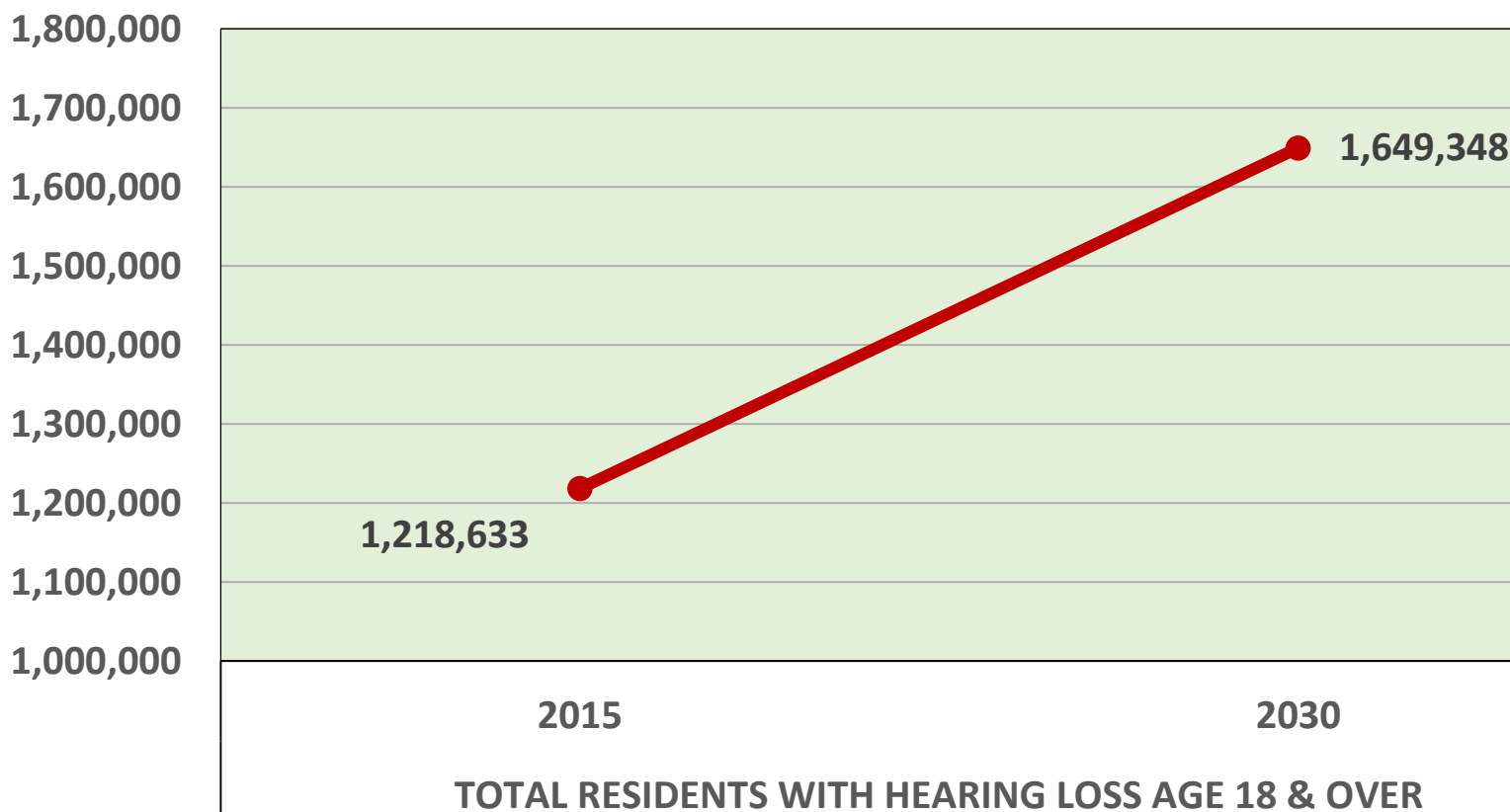


The Scope of the Problem: Growth in the Number of Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind



Projected Increase in Prevalence of Persons With Hearing Loss in North Carolina, 2015-2030

**2015 - 2030 PROJECTED INCREASE
IN NC POPULATION 18 & OLDER WITH HEARING LOSS**



Source: North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, March 30, 2017



Barriers and Consequences of Ineffective Communication



Barriers to Effective Communication Among Persons with Hearing Loss

- Many individuals with hearing loss lack the knowledge and resources to effectively advocate for themselves, live well with their hearing loss and benefit from assistive technology
 - Few wear hearing aids
 - 93% of Hard of Hearing people could benefit from hearing aids, but only 15% use them
 - Lack of insurance for hearing aids
- Few have the psychosocial skills to effectively advocate for themselves
- Health care providers lack the knowledge and resources to ensure Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people have the same access to their services and resources as the general population



Barriers to Effective Communication Among Persons with Hearing Loss

A 2009 survey of Directors of Skilled Care Facilities in North Carolina provided examples of the lack of knowledge and resources, among health care providers, regarding effective communication among persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. Of the 254 respondents:

- 56% rated themselves less than knowledgeable of hearing loss and the overall impact on older adults
- 72% stated no hearing loss professionals visit facilities
- 68% were not aware of hearing aid purchase assistance programs
- 63% do not provide hearing loss assessments as part of the intake process
- 54% consider the facility to be fully accessible for ALL persons with hearing loss

The directors requested 1) more information; and 2) hearing aid purchase assistance from Medicare and Medicaid for residents.



Current Research on Communication Access Barriers In Healthcare Settings

Since there is much anecdotal evidence about communication access barriers in health care settings, DSDHH has partnered with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Sheps Research Center and Gallaudet University to complete a study on communication access in health care settings.

The study currently is underway and is using cutting-edge survey research methodology to administer surveys in ASL as well as English. By doing so, we hope to gain accurate and detailed knowledge, from consumers, on the communication access barriers they face in health care settings so we can help develop effective solutions.



Economic Impact of Untreated Hearing Loss

Prevalence Based with Direct Costs

- Diagnostic – includes costs of consultation with physicians audiologists, otolaryngologists and other specialists
- Rehabilitation – hearing aids and other assistive listening devices, including surgery



Societal Perspective with Indirect Costs

- Productivity Losses – includes unemployment, underemployment, and other income losses
- Foregone tax revenue for local, state, and federal governments

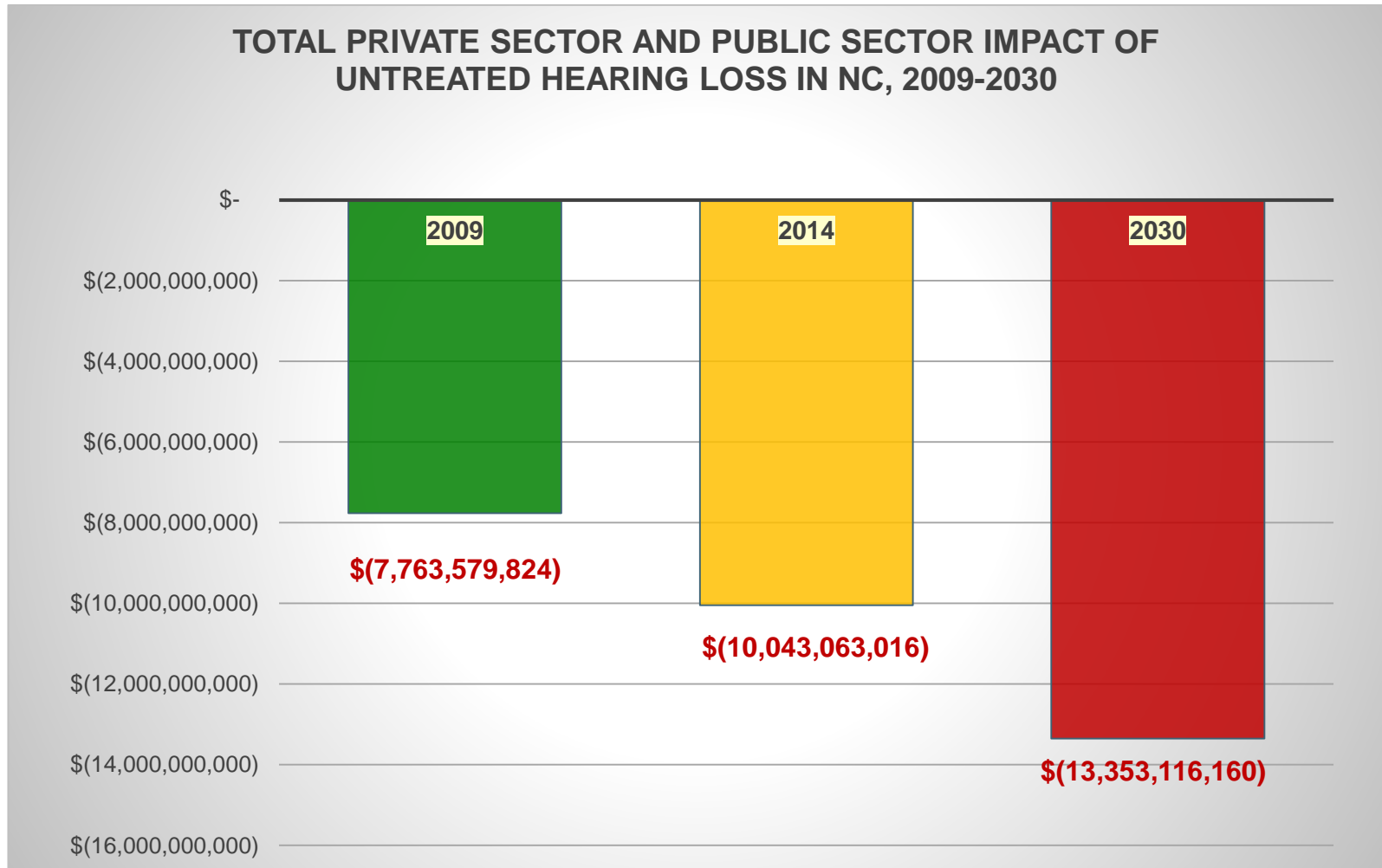


Intangible Costs

- Quality of life – assessment of impact on activities for daily living and emotional and social well-being

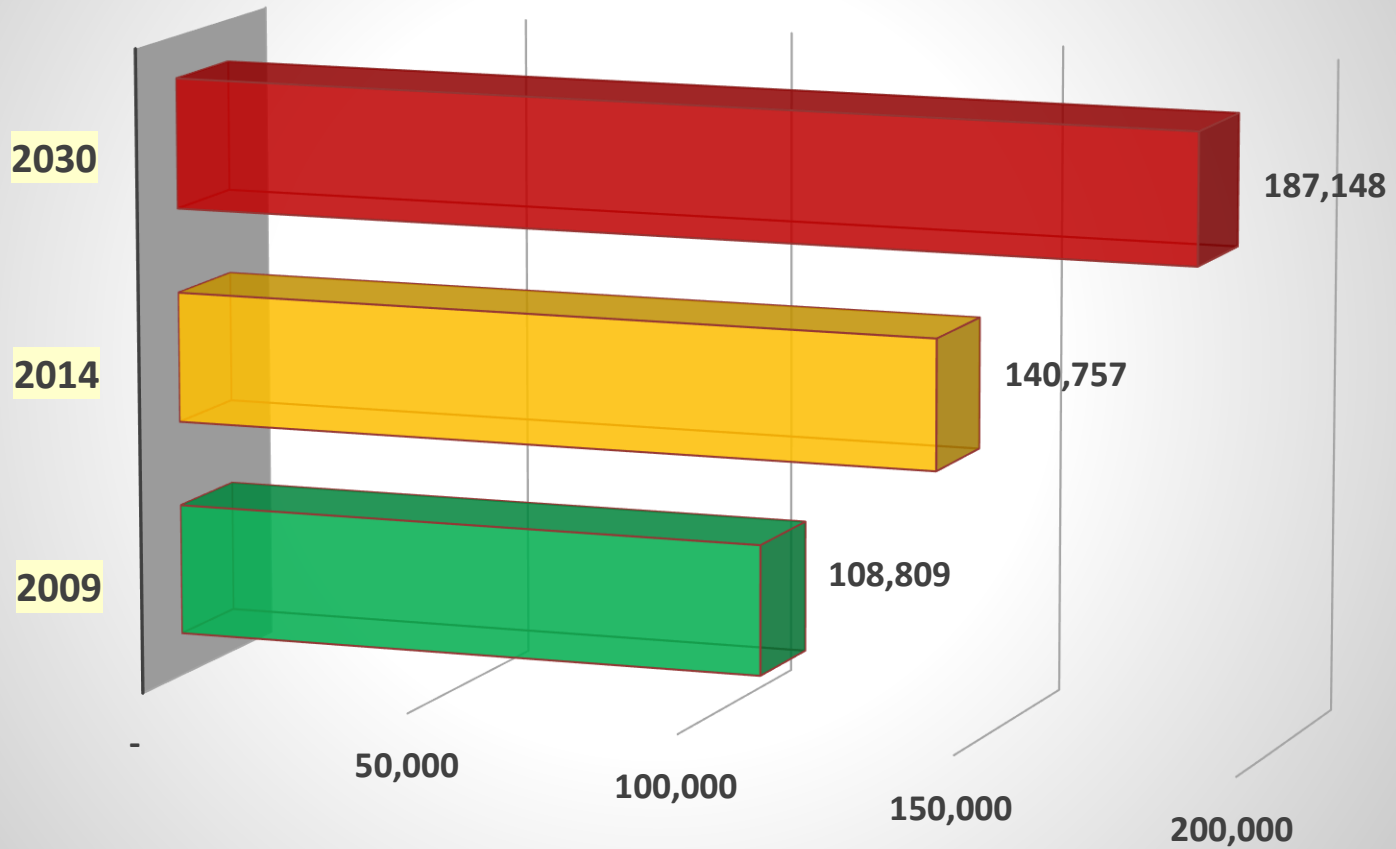


Impact of Untreated Hearing Loss in NC on State Revenue



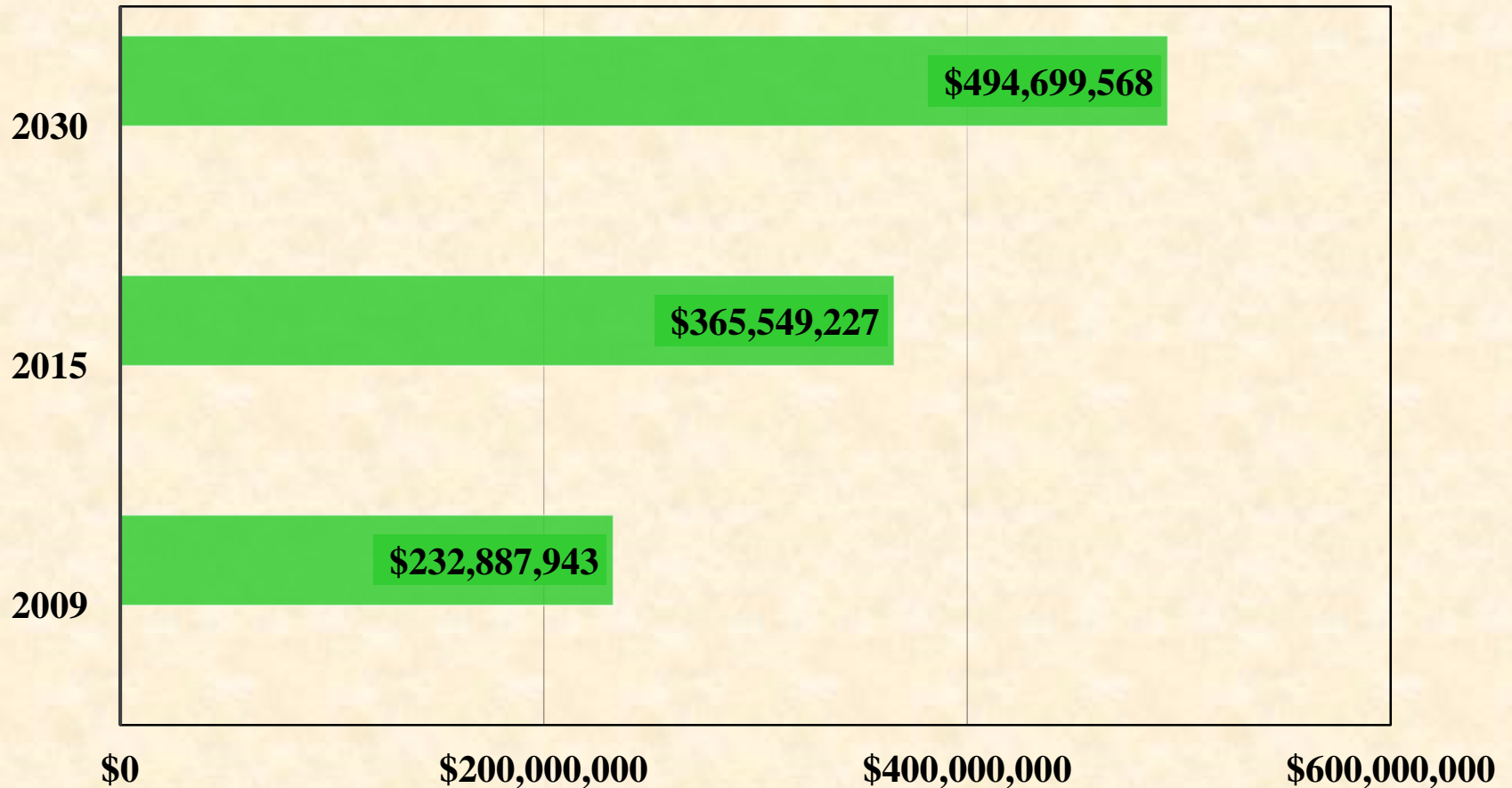
Impact of Untreated Hearing Loss in NC on Employment

JOB LOSSES PER YEAR ATTRIBUTABLE TO UNTREATED HEARING LOSS



Potential Impact, on North Carolina Employment, of Providing Communication Access in Health Care

Potential, Annual Economic Impact of Providing Communication Access in Health Care for Persons With Hearing Loss in North Carolina



Intangible Costs - Impact on Activities for Daily Living

Denial has a major impact on hearing loss in adults. It takes the average adult with hearing loss between 7 to 15 years before they will actively address their hearing challenges. Some of the challenges for untreated hearing loss are:

- Increased isolation;
- Lowered self-esteem; and
- Depression.

After a person actively does something about their hearing loss (e.g. receives hearing aids) many are able to return to actively participating with family and friends and get back a large part of their quality of life that had been lost.





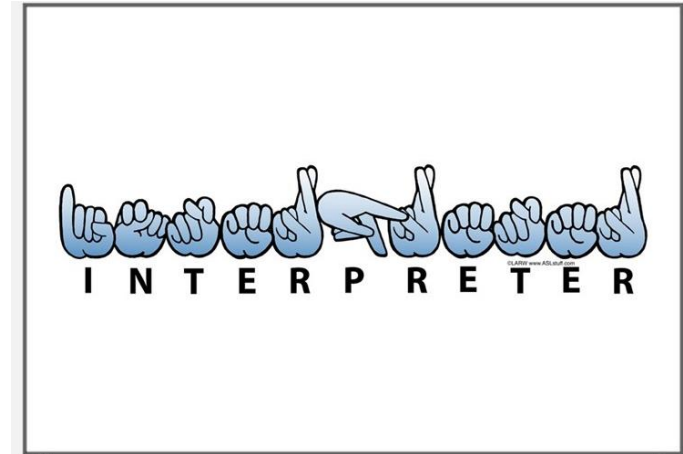
The Availability of Interpreters and Assistive Technology



The High Costs of Interpreters and Hearing Aids

➤ High cost of interpreters

- In North Carolina, the cost of an interpreter ranges from \$125 to \$220 for each appointment



➤ High cost of hearing aids

- The average price of a single hearing aid is \$2,300

Source: American Association of Retired Persons

- There is poor or nonexistent insurance coverage for hearing aids





Possible Solutions for Addressing Communication Access Barriers in Healthcare Settings



Possible Solutions for Addressing Communication Access Barriers in Healthcare Settings

- Trainings
 - AHEC
 - North Carolina Hospital Association
 - Medical and Professional Associations
- Business Practices
 - Streamline and standardize processes for greater access
- Insurance and Service Delivery Policies
- Medicaid initiative
- Communication Access Fund
- Healthy North Carolina 2030

