0468 '00 ~~APR 5-6~~ 3 P1:37

Dear Cathy & Jim Harris.

Enclosed is my letter to FDA. I hope that it helps

I'm also putting you on my prayer list.

All the best

John McDonald

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JOHN B MCDONALD, JR
26 SYLVIA TERRACE
NEW MONMOUTH, N.J 07748

March 6, 2000

MS. Jane Henney, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Ms Henney:

I am writing to voice my opposition to proposed new legislation introduced by audiologists and/or medical doctors that would mandate that persons who wish to purchase or try out a hearing aid must first see a doctor or audiologist. While it should also be recommended that persons first visit a doctor or audiologist for an examination and/or hearing test, it should not become obligatory. This to me seems to be a case of BIG BROTHER GOVERNMENT deciding what is best for everyone. While it may be best for doctors and audiologists, it is not necessarily best for consumers. Which are the people I understand the FDA is supposed to protect.

The purchase of hearing aids by mail should be returned as

an option. I have been a happy customer of EXCEL Hearing Solutions in De Kalb, Illinois - Catherine and Jim Hovis - and their predecessor company for 25 years. They have done a wonderful job being pro-consumer. Their hearing aids are affordable and they permit their customers to pay for their aids with favorable payment plans. They also provide money back guarantee if the customer is not 100% satisfied. They have always been responsive to my needs quickly - whether I needed my hearing aid repaired or accessories such as tubing, batteries, etc.

While an evaluation by an audiologist can be important and should be recommended, it should not be the sole option. What about our senior citizens who can't get to an audiologist? Is the audiologist going to make house calls? I don't think so! While I'm sure that most audiologists believe that a hearing test administered by them is important, they should not be permitted to preclude persons from being able to purchase directly by mail - if that is their choice.

There are many persons who will not be able to afford to

purchase hearing aids if people like Catherine and Jim Harris are forced out of business. They perform a needed service.

I'm an attorney and can afford more expensive hearing aids. I paid $4,000 in 1994 for 3M behind the ear computer programmable aids. Can a person on a fixed income afford such a purchase? The F-188 behind the ear aids I purchased from Excel are reliable back-up - at a fraction of the cost of my 3M aids.

Another reason to support people like Catherine and Jim Harris is the fact that virtually all health/medical insurance plans do not provide coverage for hearing aids. By eliminating the mail order supplier, more people who need hearing aids will not be able to purchase them since they will be cost prohibitive.

Although a hearing aid can't help everyone, it can help most people enjoy a higher quality of life. It is people like Catherine & Jim Harris who help hearing aids affordable.

I sincerely hope that you will indicate your disapproval of this proposed ~~[illegible]~~ legislation.

Thank you for your anticipated consideration of the ideas expressed in this letter

Very truly yours

John B McWorkel Jr

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