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November 20, 2000

Honorable Donna Shalala
Secretary of Health & Human Services
Room 615 F
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

I have been told that the Food and Drug Administration is in the process of proposing changes to the way hearing aids are sold that will likely impede access to hearing care services for millions of hearing impaired and senior citizens like myself.

Presently all three members of the hearing health care delivery team (Hearing Instrument Specialists, Audiologists and Physicians) are recognized as qualified entry points into the hearing care delivery system. The rule that the FDA is advocating would allow audiologists, without any justification, to install themselves as the sole entry point into hearing health care, by allowing states to require expensive and non-essential tests that only audiologists are qualified to perform.

Allowing audiologists an exclusive role in the hearing aid delivery system, with unqualified medical data evidencing that such a role is necessary for public health and safety, would severely undermine public health and safety, and would increase costs to the hearing impaired and to senior citizens.

The medical community, specifically the American Academy of Otolaryngologists (Ear, Nose, and Throat specialists) opposes this FDA proposal.

Please consider that this FDA-proposed hearing aid rule be withdrawn.

I look forward to your response.

Cordially,


KELSO JONES

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