



710 N. Vermilion  
Danville, IL 61832  
Tel. (217) 443-0682  
Fax (217) 443-8358

400 1/2 E. Champaign  
Rantoul, IL 61866  
Tel. (217) 892-8626  
Fax (217) 892-9394

1402 S. Neil  
Champaign, IL 61820  
Tel. (217) 359-3331  
Fax (217) 359-3397

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Danville - 1-800-834-7812

Champaign 1-800-606-8542

September 16, 2000

Honorable Donna Shalala  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Room 615F  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

I am a small business owner in Danville and Champaign, Illinois, providing hearing health care services to the area's hearing impaired. I am very concerned that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reportedly advocating changes to the current hearing aid regulations that would dramatically increase the cost of hearing health care and reduce access to hearing health care providers. Please take the time to consider the impact of this proposed hearing aid rule on the nation's hearing-impaired and on the nation's small business hearing health care providers, as required by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA).

Hearing health care providers like me have been working with the FDA since 1993 to streamline the current FDA hearing aid regulations. Now, just weeks before the election of a new Administration, FDA is rushing to put forth a proposal that could eliminate hearing aid specialists like me from the marketplace. FDA reportedly favors allowing each state to determine the conditions for dispensing hearing aids. This will create inconsistency and confusion and will launch a 50-state effort by audiologists to install themselves as the sole gatekeepers to hearing health care without any medical or health policy justification.

As you may have seen, the AARP recently published a Consumer Guide to Hearing Aids which found that "almost everyone with a hearing loss hears better with a hearing aid, yet only 20 percent of those who need a hearing aid have one." Please don't let the FDA erect unwarranted barriers to this safe and effective medical device.

Please don't let the FDA publish its proposed hearing aid rule.

Sincerely,

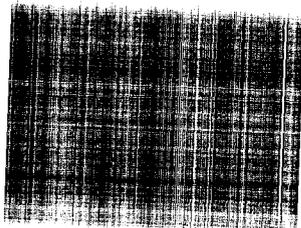
Bekki Kist, BC-HIS, ACA

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*Belton*  
HEARING AID SERVICE

710 N. Vermilion  
Danville, IL 61832



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