

David Elder
19133 Playmaker's Road
Covington, Louisiana 70435
(604) 626-5247

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

Dear Secretary Shelala:

I just learned that the government may put me out of business and I am hoping you can do something to stop it.

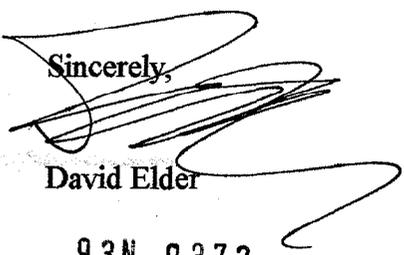
I am a hearing aid specialist and operate a small business in Mandeville, Louisiana. Over the past ten years my wife and I have serviced over two thousand hearing impaired Louisianians. It is my understanding that the Food and Drug Administration is now recommending a rule to revise the way hearing aids are sold in this country. The FDA is planing to allow the states to choose which tests must be required prior to purchasing a hearing aid, and also which providers are qualified to conduct such tests.

Currently, hearing aid specialists, physicians, and audiologists are the qualified entry points into the hearing health care system, however, if the FDA defers to the states, audiologists have indicated that they would endeavor to position themselves as the sole entry point into hearing health care. Such gatekeeper status could be achieved by lobbying states to require extensive hearing tests (quite unnecessary for amplification selection) that only audiologists provide. This would not only force hearing aid specialists such as myself, out of business, but also, it would greatly increase the costs to the hearing impaired. Allow me to point out that it was not until recent times that audiologists were even allowed to sell hearing aids.

Secretary Shelala, please don't allow the FDA to tamper with a profession that has served the hearing impaired for so many years. My wife and I have never received a single complaint over the many years we have been helping people hear better.

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

Sincerely,


David Elder

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