



The Hearing Aid Center

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Randy Wohlers, BC - HIS
Michael Baughn, BC - HIS
Osamu Manabe, Mem. NHAS

Ala Moana
1441 Kapiolani Blvd, Ste 2003
Honolulu, HI 96814
Telephone: (808) 973-1551
Fax: (808) 973-1550

Pearlridge
98-200 Kam Hwy, Ste 306
Aiea, Hawaii 96701
Telephone: 483-4131
Fax: 483-4133

Kaneohe
46-001 Kam Hwy, Ste 102
Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744
Telephone: 233-1100
Fax: 233-1103

Maui
350 Hukilike Street, Ste B
Kahului, Maui, HI 96732
Telephone: 877-1518
Fax: 877-3208

Hilo
417 Kilauea Ave. #B-7
Hilo, Hawaii 96720
Telephone: 935-2008

Kailua-Kona
75-5995 Kuakini Hwy, Ste 123
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 96740
Telephone: 329-8300

September 25, 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 Honolulu, Hawaii, 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,

Michael Baughn
Michael Baughn, BC-HIS

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THE HEARING AID CENTER
98-200 Kam. Hwy., Ste. 306
Aiea, HI. 96701



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