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October 10, 2000

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

The Wallis/Villaseñor Family
Serving 19
West Texas Counties
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Dear Secretary Shalala

As a Hearing Instrument Specialist and hearing health care provider, I write with respect to hearing aids. As the AARP has confirmed, hearing aids are highly effective but dramatically underutilized medical devices.

I am very concerned with reports that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has reportedly sent to you a proposal for revising the current regulations governing the dispensing of hearing aids in this country that would dramatically increase the cost of hearing health care services and restrict access to the hearing health care providers. Please stop and carefully consider the impact that this proposed rule will have on the nation's hearing impaired and on the nation's small business hearing aid specialists. In particular, please ensure that any proposed rule meets the obligations of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

Hearing Impairment is a major health care concern. Please don't let the FDA put forth their proposed rule that would impede access to needed hearing health care services for millions of Americans.

Very truly yours,

Jimmie Gilham
Texas Licensed Hearing
Instrument Specialist
Beltone Hearing Care Center

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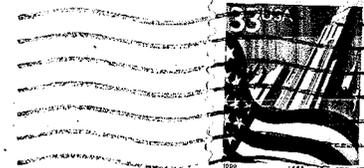
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