

Jerry Alan Bergman
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September 1, 2019

In Re: Needed Modification of Proposed New Mexico Hearing Aid Dispensing Rule

To Whom It May Concern:

As a late-deafened adult with profound hearing loss, a consumer advocate for people with hearing loss, and a member of the New York State Hearing Aid Dispensing Advisory Board, I have followed with keen interest New Mexico's move toward a rule requiring hearing aid dispensers to counsel consumers regarding the technology needed for wireless access to assistive listening systems in places of public accommodation.

New York State has had a similar rule in effect for nearly two decades. Yet we repeatedly are told by hearing aid users that their hearing healthcare professionals did not give them hearing aids with telecoils, did not advise them of the function of telecoils and/or did not activate the hearing aid setting needed for telecoils to facilitate wireless communication access. The hearing loss community is therefore pursuing dispensing rule modifications in states throughout the country.

It is my view, based on nearly a decade of interaction with consumers, audiologists and dispensers, and my familiarity with our State's licensing procedures, that a bill of sale or receipt for all hearing aid sales must affirm: A) that assistive listening technology options were discussed, and B) whether or not the hearing instrument sold contains such technology. Only with the addition of B) will the *sellers* have evidence to indicate that their clients declined the technology and buyers (consumers) to know if the hearing aids dispensed contain the technology. With such wording there should then be no question as to whether or not telecoils were discussed.

Please understand that this is more than a minor procedural modification. I believe that thousands of people with hearing loss, including a high percentage of senior citizens, are currently unable to sustain active, outgoing lives because they cannot hear in houses of worship and in local educational, arts and cultural venues due to lack of awareness regarding hearing aid technology available from their AuDs or dispensers at little or no additional cost.

Sincerely,

Jerry Bergman
Certified Hearing Loss Peer Mentor
Founder and Chair, Hearing Accommodation Task Force of New York
Member, NYS Hearing Aid Dispensing Advisory Board
Member, New York City Chapter, Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)
Past President, HLAA New York State Association