



May 24, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), located in Bethesda, Maryland, is the nation's leading consumer based organization serving the estimated 48 million Americans with hearing loss. HLAA has a strong interest in legislation at the state level that affects their needs and concerns. I am writing to you in regard to a bill to be introduced in the New Mexico legislature that could help to ensure that New Mexico residents being treated for hearing loss are fully informed of their options prior to spending thousands of their hard-earned dollars for hearing aids.

A recent survey found that two-thirds of first-time hearing aid buyers were never told of an invaluable assistive listening technology that benefits them in some settings where no other currently available technology can. This problem is also repeatedly reported to us individually by HLAA members throughout the country. The technology is telecoils and they are the only currently available technology that allows assistive listening systems to comply with the updated hearing aid compatibility requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act. They normally add little or nothing to the cost of hearing aids and are available in more than 70 percent of hearing aid models currently on the market.

Further, telecoil-based assistive listening systems have been documented to be the preferred assistive listening technology for the vast majority of hearing aid users, allowing them to access such systems without having to remove their hearing aids and replace them with FM or infrared receivers and headsets. Yet, more than 60 out of every 100 first-time hearing aid buyers are never told about telecoils and offered the opportunity to have them in their hearing aids.

In the last several years, six states have put regulations in force which require that hearing care providers counsel their clients on telecoil technology prior to the sale and fitting of hearing aids. Such regulations are currently being explored in California, Colorado, Iowa, Washington, Wisconsin, and your own state of New Mexico to address the problem of hearing care providers taking it upon themselves to make decisions on telecoils that should rightfully be the choice of consumers. The counseling that it would require would inform hearing aid buyers of the many benefits they could derive from having telecoils in their hearing aids including, but not limited to, hearing the proceedings in city council meetings, theaters, places of worship and other venues in New Mexico that now feature hearing aid compatible assistive listening systems.

HLAA supports the proposed New Mexico regulation and we respectfully request that you consider supporting this bill when it comes before you in the legislature. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have for me on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Kelley".

Barbara Kelley
Executive Director