

June 17, 2019

To whom it may concern,

As an audiologist with nearly 40 years of experience, I retired from my private audiology practice to become a volunteer national spokesperson for the Hearing Loss Association of America, the nation's leading non-profit support organization for those with hearing loss. In this capacity I travel the country to educate consumers about hearing loss and on how to buy hearing healthcare and ensure that they purchase hearing aids with the features that serve their individual needs.

It is my experience that for the ordinary consumer buying hearing aids is difficult as well as stressful as, usually, a lot of money is involved. Few consumers are fully educated about the fact that purchasing a hearing aid is only part of the solution to treat hearing loss. Studies confirm that in large public places hearing aids are of limited benefit and consumers may need to avail themselves of assistive listening systems as mandated under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I have, from afar, therefore applauded the initiative in NM which requires that prospective purchasers of hearing aids be informed at the time of the initial examination about hearing aid options that provide a direct connection between the hearing aid and assistive listening systems.

How, as a consumer, do you know that you might want a certain option on a hearing aid if the provider hasn't taken the time to explain this option PRIOR to the ordering and purchase of the hearing aid? (Oh -you want to drive this car in the dark? Well in that case you may just want to get headlights on your new car!) I believe every consumer needs to be fully informed and that the language of the hearing aid purchase contract should reflect that this has actually happened. In my opinion this requires the dispenser and the consumer to initial a statement that confirms this sharing of information has happened. Requiring the consumer to initial such a stipulation on the contract will not only protect the consumer (he or she will have been given full information to make an informed decision as to what features to purchase on hearing aids) and also the provider (as in the case when a consumer comes back to claim that he or she was never told about assistive listening technology.)

I therefore urge the NM SLP, Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensing Practices Board to serve in not only the providers' but also the consumers' best interest by making it very clear on the purchase contract that full disclosure has occurred by requiring that the statement to that effect be initialed by both the buyer and the seller.

Sincerely,

Juliëtte Sterkens, AuD
1010 N Westfield Street #514
Oshkosh WI 5490
juliette.sterkens@outlook.com