



The Nation's Voice for People with Hearing Loss

December 1, 2016

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Grassley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Warren and Grassley:

On behalf of the nation's foremost organization representing people with hearing loss, I am pleased to offer our enthusiastic endorsement of your legislation to expand access to over-the-counter hearing aids. The "Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2016" will dramatically improve the lives of millions of Americans living with hearing loss.

Of the estimated 30 million Americans who have age-related hearing loss, only about 14 percent of them are currently using hearing aids. The primary reason for this disparity is the high cost of hearing aids, which typically cost thousands of dollars. Each and every day, our office receives letters, phone calls and emails from people with hearing loss inquiring about financial assistance to purchase hearing aids. (up to 10 requests a day). The financial help page on hearingloss.org is the number one visited page on HLAA's website. Sadly, there are few financial aid resources. Creating a category of over-the-counter hearing aids will go a long way toward making these essential devices affordable for the millions of Americans who need them.

The approval of over-the-counter hearing aids will also cut through the red tape and myriad federal, state and local regulations that currently make purchasing a hearing aid intimidating even for those who can afford them. As hearing aids become more affordable and easier to purchase, HLAA believes the stigma associated with hearing aid use will decline and far more Americans will take advantage of them.

The current regulatory framework regarding hearing aids was developed at a time when over-the-counter devices provided little real benefit and too often added to the frustration of those experiencing hearing loss. Technological advances in recent years have made over-the-counter aids a viable option for many people with mild and moderate hearing loss.

The benefit of making hearing aids more affordable and accessible extends far beyond the well-being of the individual with hearing loss and his or her family. As more consumers with hearing loss make use of hearing aids, workers become more productive creating a potential economic benefit to the nation at large.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. The Hearing Loss Association of America and our thousands of members across the nation stand ready to work with you to see this vital legislation become law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Kelley
Executive Director