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December 19, 2012

Director, Regulation, Policy and Management (02REG),  
Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont. Ave. NW, Room 1068  
Washington, DC 20420

RE: RIN 2900-AO46 ó Authorization for Non-VA Medical Services

Dear Director:

On behalf of the 1,100 licensed hearing professionals in New Jersey, I respectfully request that the Department of Veterans Affairs change its current status of hearing aid specialists, so they are given access to care for our nation's veterans.

Currently, VA clinics are permitted to contract with hearing aid specialists when the clinics cannot fill the need for services, however, only state licensed audiologists are permitted to perform the hearing evaluations. With a backlog of hundreds of thousands of Veterans in need of service-related disabilities, including hearing loss and tinnitus, licensed hearing aid specialists have the expertise and training to help. It does not make sense to cut-off these credentialed health professionals who in many ways can help with access since they often service rural areas and perform home visits.

In New Jersey, dispensers must have a minimum of an associate's degree in hearing aid selection and fitting; proof of completion of a minimum of six months continuous training within a 24-month period; and have passed a written and practicum state licensing exam. They are more than qualified to provide the necessary comprehensive hearing evaluations and should be given the access to care for our veterans. A change in policy is in the best interest of the health and wellness of our country's heroes.

Sincerely,

David A. Weesner, AuD  
President  
New Jersey Association of Hearing Health Professionals

c: Sen. Frank Lautenberg  
Sen. Robert Menendez  
Rep. Jon Runyan

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