

April 17, 2017

The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy III
The Honorable Buddy Carter
The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
The Honorable Don Bacon
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kennedy, Carter, Blackburn, and Bacon:

Consumers Union, the policy and mobilization arm of Consumer Reports, is pleased to support H.R. 1652, the “Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017,” your legislation to help make hearing aids available to consumers more conveniently and affordably.

As noted in our recent article in the March 2017 issue of Consumer Reports,¹ price considerations keep many Americans from getting hearing assistance instruments that could make a big difference in their quality of life.

H.R. 1652 would broaden the range of hearing aids available over the counter to adults with mild to moderate hearing loss. These devices would then be available for purchase separately from medical evaluations and services, giving consumers more affordable and accessible options.

We believe the bill would preserve and reinforce important consumer safety protections, including state laws holding manufacturers responsible for harm caused by unsafe and defective products, while overriding state laws designed to block or impede consumer access to over-the-counter hearing aids. This would include overriding state laws that require medical exams as a prerequisite for purchasing these over-the-counter products. We continue to encourage consumers with hearing loss problems to seek medical evaluation, to rule out other possible medical issues. But consumers can benefit from a system in which the medical evaluation is separated from the purchase of the device, so consumers are able to make their own choices, to shop around for medical services and hearing aids that best suit their needs and their budget.

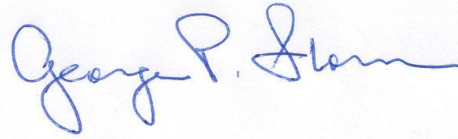
¹ Insights: No More Suffering in Silence?, <http://consumersunion.org/research/consumer-reports-insights-no-more-suffering-in-silence/>.

We look forward to working with you to enact this beneficial consumer legislation into law. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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

Lisa McGiffert
Director, Safe Patient Project
Consumers Union

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George P. Slover". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George P. Slover
Senior Policy Counsel
Consumers Union