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November 21, 2000

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW, TW-A325
Washington DC 20554

E. Wendy Austrie,
Policy Division, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
Room 3-B101
445 12th Street SW
Washington DC 20554

Re: RM#8658
Wireless Telephones should be covered by the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988

To Whom it May Concern:

My partner has a bilateral hearing loss and wears hearing aids. As an attorney, a digital wireless telephone is crucial to performing her job effectively. After spending countless hours trying out numerous digital wireless phone models, she concluded that there are no wireless phones that she is aware of that are compatible with the T-coil on her hearing aids, which caused her to purchase a very expensive phone (approximately $200) and $100 attachment. However, even with this attachment, she experiences constant loud interference, which often makes communication difficult to impossible.

The current law covering digital wireless phones is not stringent enough to get industry to solve this problem. The "readily achievable" standard is too weak. We need the stronger standard of the Hearing Aid Compatibility law to solve this problem.

Congress directed the FCC to review the exemptions to the HAC Act. In response, the FCC announced it would do so at least every five years. It has not done any review.

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Analog service is increasingly difficult to find, more expensive than digital, and offers less options (including but not limited to email, voicemail, caller ID, and text messaging). The need for full access to digital wireless phones, not just for emergency use but in all aspects of daily life and especially at work is crucial. Digital wireless phones are competing to offer cheaper service than regular wireline phones and could replace wireline service in our homes in the future. This would cause hearing aid users to have no effective means of communication in the future.

Now is the time to have wireless phones subject to a law with more teeth so that people with hearing loss can use them and be assured of having access to an increasingly vital technology. The FCC should do away with the exemption for wireless phones under the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Hause

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cc.
SHHH
Brenda Battat

RLH:wbs