



February 13, 2017

House Health & Human Services Committee Members

My name is Paul Rowden. I am a licensed Hearing Instrument Specialist and own the Beltone Hearing Centers in South Central and Southwestern Kansas. I understand the current efforts to move the Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners (KBHAE) to be under the control of KDADS is being promoted by many audiologists and some members of KDADS to be best for the consumers of the state of Kansas; however, I do not believe this to be the case for the following reasons:

1. I believe moving KBHAE under KDADS will not be a cost savings to the State of Kansas. In fact, there is a potential for an increase in cost. KBHAE is a totally "dues" supported organization that since 1968 has returned revenue to the State of Kansas each year.
2. This action will reduce consumer accessibility for hearing health care in rural Kansas where audiologists have not established conventional dispensing practices. As an example, I have offices in Garden City and Dodge City with satellite locations in Scott City and Ulysses to serve people in those communities. There are almost no audiologists in those communities.
3. Our Veterans Choice Programs recognize the importance of accessibility to hearing health care specifically in rural areas allowing traditional hearing instrument specialists to provide timely hearing health care to our veterans.
4. I believe the potential livelihood of the traditional hearing instrument specialist will be in jeopardy due to the potential restrictions that may be set forth to entry into their profession.
5. Finally, consumer protection will not be improved by moving KBHAE under KDADS. The process for handling consumer complaints will be more prolonged and complicated. KBHAE very efficiently handles complaints in 1 to 2 business days. If complaints require a hearing, these can be carried out within days, not delayed by weeks. If additional consideration is required, then the complaint is reviewed by the Attorney General's Office. It is both timely and cost-effective.

I ask that you please consider my thoughts as you move forward with your decisions. It is my belief that the most important things to consider here are: Is this move better for the State of Kansas financially, and, is it better for the consumers that we hearing instrument specialists serve in rural Kansas?

Best regards,
Paul G. Rowden, Owner
Beltone Hearing Centers