



**TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS
ON RAISED BILL 5497: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE
CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALISTS AND
AUDIOLOGISTS**

Committee members:

My name is Richard Usifer, and I am president of the Connecticut Hearing Aid Dispenser's Organization (CHADO). Our group consists of hearing instrument specialists and audiologists in Connecticut.

CHADO strongly supports the recommendations of the February 22nd report from the Office of Program Review and Investigations on hearing instrument specialists. I worked closely with Ms. Kluger, who wrote the report, over the past several months. Her thorough report covers every aspect of hearing aid dispensing in the State of Connecticut, particularly relating to consumer protection.

Essentially, her report supports the status quo except for two areas. I won't reiterate her rationale for keeping the current system, which serves consumers well without being onerous to dispensers. We have no issue with removing the remaining hearing aid licensure requirement for audiologists. I want to focus on the recommendation for Continuing Education, which is crucial to protecting consumers.

We favor mandatory continuing education for hearing care providers. The past 20 years have seen an explosion of new technologies. When programmable and digital aids came out 20 years ago, hearing aid fitting instantly became much more challenging. What we used to do with screwdrivers and lamb's wool was now done with computers and real-ear measurement. Consumers had to be careful due to the potential for people to sell expensive products without having the training or competency in fitting them. And they had no easy way to know if dispensers had that training. This is why we feel continuing education is more important now than ever.

Monitoring of CEUs would be incumbent on the licensee, so there would be little or no extra work for DPH. License renewal applications now have a box which the licensee must check to affirm that they have met continuing ed requirements. There would be little to no additional cost to dispensers for CEUs. Manufacturers offer several

accredited seminars within easy driving distance at no charge to promote their products. CEUs are also available online at minimal cost. Many dispensers will attend a convention which would cover all of their CEU needs for that year.

To conclude, CHADO for the past nearly 50 years has always stood up for the best interests of consumers and hearing instrument specialists in our State. There are other pressing concerns in our industry, including internet and mail order hearing aids, but we feel that this bill will help consumers by continuing regulation and expanding education.

Richard Usifer
President
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