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FCC regarding HAC Code of Federal Regs Part 68.4 (a)
Compatibility of Cell Phones and Hearing Aids

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Elizabeth Anderson I am 53 years old and have worn a hearing aid since I was 15 years old. German measles, surgeries and health complications resulted in my need to wear a hearing aid in my teen years and at age 40, when I could afford it, I began to wear two aids. I am very grateful to be able to utilize hearing aids for a sense that many people may take for granted.

I want to share with you information that may help the hearing impaired such as myself to be able to utilize new technology being developed today. My main focus is on cell phones and hearing aids. I am very disappointed in my recent experiences with new technology in the manufacture of cell phones and hearing aids.

My husband surprised me at Christmas with a new cell phone; a digital purchased through Cellular One a dealer in our area. We had a contract with this company for the past two years with an analog phone. I needed a phone for my work and he thought it best to upgrade with a digital and bought a companion plan with two new digital cell phones. He was told that the digital have twice the battery life, clearer sound and that they no longer are selling analog phones and are discontinuing analog plans. Shortly after buying the phones I tried using my new digital. I had such a loud humming that I could not even hear the dial tone let alone my daughters' voice on the phone. After several tries and no change I visited the Cellular One salesperson at Sams Club where my husband purchased the plan. We explained the new Ericcson phone simply did not work with my hearing aid. The salesman at Sam's Club said he knew nothing about it and that I should call the Ericcson 800 number, which I did. The operator explained that the digital phones were not compatible with hearing aids and that I could purchase a "loop" system. She explained that the the cell phone companies had received a waiver in ensuring cell phones compatibility with hearing aids. I then went directly to the Cellular One sales office after waiting in line for a half hour, I explained the problem and asked the salesman to listen near my ear while I held the phone to my hearing aid, he could hear the humming as it was so loud. He knew nothing either of this problem. I tried two

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different Motorola's, three Nokias and an Ericsson. None of these worked. They told me to keep the analog and they would try to find out more information. After not hearing anything for a week I called the main office of Cellular One and explained that if they could not find a phone to work with my aid I wanted to cancel our service. I was told that there would be a \$25 cancellation fee monthly for the length of the contract, which was 12 months. I was told that because "I did not check to see if the phone was compatible with my aid, I was liable for the duration of the contract and that there is no guarantee on these phones" she said "read the words on the contract your husband signed." One needs a magnifying glass to read the fine print. I explained we never thought we would have this problem after we had a contract with them for the past two years with a phone that worked. After several calls, to Cellular One Home office in Wausau, WI and not any satisfaction I started to check further options. I began a search on finding a compatible phone.

I went to Radio Shack and after trying four phones I found a Nokia I could hear with, offered through Sprint which does not serve our area two hours North of our home where we spend a great deal of time. I then went to Centurytel and after trying six phones found a Nokia that worked. I checked with Verizon cell phone Co. as my brothers Motorola worked with my aid. I was told they do not serve this area and have no plans to do so as of now.

I went back to Cellular One taking off time from my full time job once again, and gave them model names and numbers of these phones that worked with my aid from other companies. I was told the Nokia worked because Centurytel has not changed all of their signals to digital as yet. I was told that the Motorola worked but that it was in testing stages with the Cell One signal it may be years before it is available.

It has been almost two months and I am using the old analog phone for a period until which time Cell One changes all of their signaling, then it will no longer work. I am told that the contract cannot be terminated and the cancellation fee \$20 month for length of the contract (now 15 months) remains intact.

I have been offered to use a "loop" at a cost of \$100.00 at Cell One. I do not want to use a loop it is cumbersome and do not want to spend \$100, I can also purchase a Motorola that Cell One has that worked for \$185.

The cell phone plan we purchased by the way is three times that of our old analog with Cell One this included Ericsson cell phones with it. I as a hearing aid user have to purchase/use a loop or pay \$185 for a sophisticated Motorola. I feel it is most unfair to be treated in such a manner as I have been. It appears that without my hearing impairment I could have the benefit of free phones with twice the battery life and would have saved hours upon hours my time of having to research this matter which is still unresolved.

I have also had to replace both of my hearing aids this past month, that are eight years old. I have tried a Phonac hearing aid \$1200 each from Mayo Clinic with "new" technology. After a frustrating trial period I returned it to consider an Oticon without the new technology of "directional" or automatic "T-Coil" for the telephone. The "new technology" did not work with my home phone an AT&T, my work phone or with a local Department store (direct Company line) while calling to obtain billing information and orders. Needless to say the hearing aids did not work with the new digital cell phone

either! If the phone is placed just a hair out of place the sound is cut off. It appears that the hearing aid manufacturer has not developed the new digital or "T coil" system working to the benefit of hearing aid users and telephones either.

In conclusion, the cell phone companies and manufacturers have erred on the side of the hearing impaired when developing the "new technology". I understand the FCC has given waiver to allow both Cell Phones Companies and Hearing Aid manufactures to develop this technology without examining the full impact on hearing aid users. The FCC has failed the hearing impaired by allowing this injustice. Many of the cell phones do not have amplified sound. In fact it took years to get the pay phones equipped with amplified sound.

In addition to having to purchase hearing aids at a cost of \$1000 (in my case \$2000) and purchasing batteries (one lasts five days at a cost of \$1.00 each) it is unfair to allow new technology to be developed without ensuring that the hearing impaired receive equal services and respect. This should be given all regardless of their disability. Hearing aid users deserve the same respect and quality of service as others.

Please take the necessary action to resolve this problem. Thank you for your consideration of my problem. I would like a reply on how these problems will be resolved.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Anderson