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Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Report of Ex Parte Oral Communication
WT Docket No. 10-254
Hearing Aid Compatibility of Wireless Handsets

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Pursuant to Section 1.1206(b)(1) of the Commission's Rules, the **Hearing Industries Association (HIA)** hereby submits this report of an **oral ex parte** meeting, held on March 11, 2013, between representatives of HIA and Staffs of the Spectrum and Policy Competition Division of the **Wireless Telecommunications Bureau** and the Technical Research Branch of the **Office of Engineering and Technology**, discussing the subject matter of the above-referenced open docketed proceeding.

Attendees:

For HIA: Andrew Bopp, Director of Governmental Relations
David Preves, Engineer, Starkey (hearing aid manufacturer) (by video conference)
Peter Tannenwald, Legal Counsel

For WTB: Jeffrey Steinberg, Deputy Chief, Infrastructure Policy
Christina Clearwater, Assistant Chief, Competition Policy
Michael J. Rowan
Saurbh Chhabra

For OET: William Hurst, Chief, Technical Research Branch (by video conference)

The purpose of the meeting was to allow FCC Staff to observe first-hand various devices incorporating up-to-date hearing aid technology and to discuss and ask questions about future trends, including wired telecoils, wireless Bluetooth, and acoustic coupling.

Mr. Preves displayed examples of behind-the-ear, in-the-canal, and completely-in-the-canal hearing aid. He discussed some of the adjustments that users can make, the different audio response programs incorporated into the devices, and the size and placement of batteries. He also explained the wireless technologies that are currently incorporated into many hearing aids, including 902-928 MHz links to external control devices and external conversion devices that permit Bluetooth links to hearing aids. He explained that Bluetooth is confined to external devices for the time being, with accompanying inconvenience to the user, because the peak power needs of Bluetooth exceed the limited capacity of hearing aid batteries. Bluetooth is a general technology used in many devices which have greater transmission range than needed for hearing aids, and a hearing aid using Bluetooth must be compatible with these other devices. In contrast, 902-928 MHz hearing aid technology is proprietary, uses far less power than Bluetooth, and is designed to avoid channels used by other devices in the same band rather than interact with those devices.

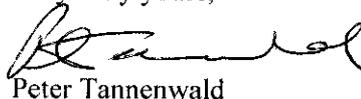
HIA also discussed increased deployment of telecoil technology, including loop systems in public places and even in taxicabs. Loop systems, where deployed, are very effective and are becoming a popular way for various venues to comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Telecoil deployment is likely to increase rather than decrease in the near term, so it is important to preserve compatibility with this technology unless and until Bluetooth or other new technologies are developed in forms that are compatible with the limited power capability of hearing aids.

Mr. Preves noted the importance of magnetic fields around earpieces, which are used to activate hearing aid programs automatically and should have a strength of at least 20 gauss. He said that some hearing aid wearers have to glue magnets to their handsets when the field generated by the handset itself is insufficient to trigger the appropriate hearing aid program.

Mr. Bopp responded to a question about educating hearing aid wearers about the compatibility rating of their hearing aids in light of Federal Drug Administration restrictions on labeling. He noted that all major hearing aid manufacturers have committed to producing devices rated at least M2 and T2, allowing most users to obtain good compatibility results with M3/T3 handsets. Hearing aid manufacturers have limited ability to educate consumers, as they have no direct relationship with consumers, who receive information from audiologists and other dispensers of hearing aids.

Finally, HIA noted the continued importance of maintaining hearing aid compatibility in light of the increasing number of members of the public who need hearing assistance and improvements in the quality and availability of hearing aid devices. The beneficial impact of HAC regulation is significant and substantial. The consumer survey submitted in this proceeding by the Hearing Loss Association of America shows that HAC problems have not all been solved. The presence of a half dozen organizations representing persons with hearing needs at HIA's recent annual meeting, along with representatives of Medicare, the Veterans Administration, and health care organizations, underscores how many people consider hearing assistance to be important and are actively engaged in making assistive technologies more readily available to more people, and how important the FCC's work in this area continues to be.

Very truly yours,


Peter Tannenwald

cc: (by e-mail) All Meeting Participants