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March 21, 2017

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Members of Congress Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Make Hearing Aids Available Over the Counter

[Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#)

[Bill Text \(PDF\)](#)

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), and Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), today reintroduced legislation to make hearing aids for those with mild to moderate hearing loss available over the counter (OTC). A companion bill led by Representatives Joe Kennedy III (D-Mass.) and Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) was also introduced in the House.

The Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2017 would make certain types of hearing aids available over the counter to Americans with mild to moderate hearing impairment. In addition, the proposed legislation would require the FDA to write regulations ensuring that this new category of OTC hearing aids meets the same high standards for safety, consumer labeling and manufacturing protections as all medical devices, providing consumers the option of an FDA-regulated device at lower cost.

"Allowing hearing aids to be sold over the counter will help bring down costs and expand consumer choices so that millions more Americans can find affordable hearing aids," **Senator Warren said.** "This bill will loosen up outdated regulations and, with the right protections in place, let the market bring great products to Massachusetts residents at far lower costs."

"I hear from Iowans about the high cost of hearing aids, and I understand the concern," **Senator Chuck Grassley said.** "If you can buy non-prescription reading glasses over the counter, it makes sense that you should be able to buy basic, safe hearing aids, too. The goal is that by making more products more easily available to consumers, competition will increase and lead to lower costs. More consumer choice and convenience are what we want to accomplish with this legislation. This won't affect those who need professional expertise to be fitted for hearing aids or have hearing aids implanted. The over-the-counter option is for those who would benefit from a simpler device."

"Even when hearing aids are covered by insurance as they are in New Hampshire, seniors can still be stuck with bills totaling thousands of dollars. Allowing certain hearing aids to be sold over-the-counter, just like reading glasses are, is a common-sense step that can bring real cost savings to older Americans," said **Senator Maggie Hassan**.

"This commonsense legislation will benefit millions of Americans who depend on hearing aids to communicate with their friends and family and live a full life," said **Senator Johnny Isakson**. "This step will drive down costs, increase competition and simply make it easier for individuals with hearing loss to obtain this basic but essential product."

"Access to hearing aids shouldn't be limited by cost and a lack of competition. Recent innovation in hearing aid technology and over-the-counter sales will ensure millions of Americans are able to obtain hearing aids that improve their ability to communicate with their families, at their jobs and everywhere in between," said **Congressman Joe Kennedy III**.

"This legislation is the first step to ensuring that millions of Americans can finally have access to affordable hearing aids," said **Congressman Marsha Blackburn**.

The provisions of the Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act implement major recommendations from the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. The legislation has received endorsements from AARP, the Gerontological Society of America, and the Hearing Loss Association of America.

Nearly 30 million Americans experience age-related hearing loss, including over half of adults between the ages of 70 to 79. Yet only a small share of Americans with hearing loss - around 14 percent - use hearing aids, primarily due to their high cost. Hearing aids are not covered by Medicare or most private insurance plans, and out-of-pocket costs for a single hearing aid average \$2,400 - far out of reach for many consumers.

The bill text is available [here](#). A fact sheet about the bill is available [here](#).