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MICAH Z. KELLNER  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Bill Will Enhance Patients' Access to Hearing Aids**

**Assembly Member Micah Z. Kellner (D, WFP) introduces legislation to make hearing aids less expensive and more widely available.**

New York could take an important step this year in improving access to hearing aids for the growing number of hearing-impaired. This week, Assembly Members Micah Z. Kellner of Manhattan and Jeff Dinowitz of the Bronx introduced legislation that will make it possible for patients to purchase hearing aids directly from their doctors.

A current state law—the only one of its kind in the country—prohibits doctors who evaluate hearing loss from deriving a profit from hearing aid sales. As a result, few doctors' offices offer hearing aid services to their patients, since doing so is economically unviable.

“These restrictions create artificially high prices and unnecessary inconvenience for patients,” said Assembly Member Kellner. “Doctors' offices can provide patients with cost-effective and convenient services. This legislation would dramatically improve access to hearing aids in New York.”

Assembly Member Dinowitz said, “Physicians' offices are a key access point for patients entering the hearing health system. With only one in four people adopting hearing aids who could benefit from them and the number of hearing-impaired on the rise, we need to provide those in need of hearing aids every opportunity to get them. Patients are not being well-served by the existing law, which is anti-business and anti-consumer.”

This new legislation will enhance patients' access to treatment and increase competition among providers. Patients will be able to have continuity of care with their doctors, which is especially important when patients have complex medical conditions. A 2009 *Consumer Reports* article indicated that the best provider of hearing aids is a medical office headed by an ear, nose and throat doctor with an audiologist on staff- an unlikely option in New York under the current law.

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