

Consumer Alert: Attorney General Cameron Warns Kentuckians of Misleading Claims about Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 13, 2021) – During National Better Hearing and Speech Month, Attorney General Daniel Cameron issued a consumer alert warning Kentuckians of misleading claims about the safety and effectiveness of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aid products. Some sellers of these products may claim their hearing aids are approved, registered, or cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“Kentuckians should carefully review claims made by over-the-counter hearing aid sellers,” said Attorney General Cameron. “To avoid unnecessary health risks and financial loss, we encourage Kentuckians with a hearing loss to seek professional medical advice for appropriate hearing aid fitting.”

Dishonest companies may attempt to sell inexpensive OTC devices, claiming these products have been approved by the FDA. While Congress has legalized the sale of OTC hearing aids and directed the FDA to pass safety regulations for these products, the FDA has not approved OTC hearing aids. Furthermore, many of these products are offered to consumers at reduced prices and include misleading money-back guarantees.

Properly-fitted, medical-grade hearing aids can assist the nearly 50 million Americans, including almost 700,000 Kentuckians, suffering from some degree of hearing loss. When purchasing OTC hearing aids, Kentuckians should remember that OTC sellers are not currently required to disclose the health risks or intended users for their products. Consumers should also be aware that some of these hearing aids might be sound amplifiers, which will not adequately assist those with significant hearing loss.

Before purchasing hearing aids, Attorney General Cameron’s Office of Consumer Protection urges Kentuckians to consider these tips:

- Remember, the FDA has not approved any over-the-counter hearing aids. Over-the-counter, direct-to-consumer hearing aids are not regulated and may be of poor quality, and may not work properly for those with hearing loss.
- Be sure to research the seller with the Better Business Bureau before purchasing a product.
- Know your cancellation and refund rights. Pay attention to the timeframes and conditions for returns and refunds.
- Have your hearing screened by a medical professional who can provide information regarding hearing aid use and any associated risks. Your healthcare provider will be able to help you identify the best type of hearing device for you and assist you with a professional fitting.
- Finally, if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Be suspicious of products claiming to be FDA-approved that are sold at significantly reduced prices.