



## Breaking up the Hearing Aid Cartel - Explained

- Hearing loss affects millions of Americans – it’s a pervasive health problem, and until recently, an expensive one. Nearly two thirds of adults over 70 have hearing loss issues, but [only one third of people](#) who could benefit from a hearing aid actually get to use them.
- That’s because they are ridiculously expensive, blocking people from getting the basic care they need. Hearing aid manufacturing is controlled by just a small handful of greedy companies, amassing power and keeping prices high while patients suffer.
- That was true until the Biden administration recently stepped in. Earlier this month, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced [a new rule allowing hearing aids to be sold over the counter](#), pushed by the Biden administration to break up the monopoly power of a handful of manufacturers that sell the devices for around \$4,700 A PAIR.
- You heard that right – this cartel of a few companies ensures patients pay thousands of dollars for essential care. This new ruling will **save millions of people with hearing loss thousands of dollars.**

- Advocates have been calling for the FDA to address this for THIRTY YEARS. The rule creates a NEW category of over-the-counter hearing aids so people can buy them directly from stores or online rather than just with a prescription – lowering prices and increasing competition.
- The new ruling is a direct result of President Biden’s 2021 [Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy](#) to take on corporate concentration of power.
- This is a huge deal – it’s an example of direct action by the Biden administration that challenges monopoly power, and also shows a government at work for working people.
- It is great news for anyone with mild-to-moderate hearing loss, and anyone who has felt the pain of powerful corporations lining their pockets while our care costs go up.

#### Why you should care:

- **COST SAVING:** Despite being a necessity for more than [30 million Americans](#), hearing aids require a visit to a medical specialist and are not covered by basic Medicare. As soon as October, **Americans would be able to purchase hearing aids at pharmacies and retail stores without a prescription, SAVING an average of \$2,876 a pair.**
- **BREAK ‘EM UP:** A handful of manufacturers control the market, driving up the price of hearing aids. They include WS Audiology, Amplifon, Sonova, and Starkey. Their market power comes from sharing patents and vertical integration. **The FDA’s new ruling will finally weaken the monopoly on hearing aids**, resulting in lowered costs, and likely lead to new technology and innovation.
- **TOUT THE WIN:** Prominent figures and public officials have been [touting the ruling](#) – but we need to keep highlighting this win to show a government at work for working people.

#### Key Stats:

- Nearly **40 million Americans over the age of 18** and at least **50% of Americans over the age of 75** [report some form of hearing loss](#).
- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates more than [30 million Americans](#) need hearing aids.
- Among the two-thirds of people over the age of 70 who experience some form of hearing loss, **only 20% use hearing aids**.
- Nearly [1-in-5 manufacturing workers](#) and [1-in-6 construction workers](#) experience hearing difficulty.
- Nearly [4 million veterans suffer from hearing loss](#) or tinnitus and are among the most prevalent service-connected disabilities for veterans.
- Studies have shown that hearing loss can lead to psychological distress such as **depression and anxiety, and diseases like dementia**.
- The new FDA ruling drastically increases access to hearing aids. Americans would be able to buy hearing aids over the counter as soon as October, **saving an average of \$2,876 a pair**.

Have a question about corporate power or an idea for an upcoming edition? Please let us know. If you know a fellow advocate, leader, or organization who would also benefit from this, please encourage them to [sign up here](#).

If you need a deeper dive into hearing aids or have any questions, let us know! Please reach out to our Communications Director, Bianca Recto for more information and guidance: [bianca@fightcorporatemonopolies.org](mailto:bianca@fightcorporatemonopolies.org)

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