

Written Testimony of Dawn K Watts
Co-Founder and President Ohio Citizens for Deaf Cultures
House Health Committee

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First of all, I want to Thank Senator Russo and Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB 243. My name is Dawn K Watts, President of Ohio Citizens for Deaf Cultures. Several times, I enjoyed working with deaf or deaf blind students as mentor program whenever they contacted me to join and help with advocacy for hearing parents in IEP meeting. I also used to work as Deaf Educational Interpreter in the statewide of Ohio by Outreach Service Center at Ohio School for the Deaf where I observed deaf students in the mainstream school environment with his/her educational interpreters.

I am profound deafness and my parents were deafness, too. They were blue collar workers who could not afford to purchase me a brand new hearing aids. Therefore, they purchased a used hearing aid for me. It was different style in old times, for example, I had to put it on the chest with clip and wire to right ear. They always lectured me to be careful with my hearing aid because it was very expensive. Once I had to remove my hearing aid off during my break time at school because the wire was in my way, so I left it on the top of car parking lot. Deaf students and I were playing tag game then I went back to the classroom, I completely forgot all about my hearing aid. The next day, a teacher heard a noisy whistle and she found my hearing aid on her car. Of course, my parents punished me for not taking my responsibility, they told me they have no insurance. Int made me to realize how expensive hearing aid was. They could not afford to buy second hearing aid.

Today, I am wearing my two digital hearing aids provided by Rehabilitation service's support. It helps me to understand the sound surround. For example, I can understand the sounds of my voice, not the words, airplanes, cars, police (sounds), or someone walking behind me.

I worked with deaf boys who had serious behaviors at the horses for equine horses therapy at PBJ Connections, Inc., New Albany. They did not have hearing aids on. And, the horses were running around, I could hear LOUD the sounds of boys' yelling in the arena. I had to explain to them the reason of horses reaction. They did not understand. I explained to them that their voices and yelling in the arena affected to the horses' reaction. They were shocked because they never heard the sounds. Without hearing aid for deaf students, they lack the proper of understanding of sounds. It would be beneficial if their parents were able to pay for hearing aids thru insurance.

In Cleveland area, the school district provided hearing aids for all deaf students in school only which was a school property and not fours at home. Deaf students do not have any experience nor exposure to sounds at home.

I am totally supportive for HB 243 because deaf child/students will have full access to sounds and spoken words everyday 24 hours and 7 days. And a brand-new hearing aid will last long than used hearing aid. Hearing or Deaf Parents will not feel in stressful with their budget.