

HB 243 – Proponent Testimony by Nancy A. Creaghead, PhD
House Health Committee
October 16, 2019

Chairman Merrin, 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 HB 243. My name is Nancy Creaghead. I support HB 243 because it is critical that children with hearing loss have the best possible access to sound during their early years and throughout childhood.

I am a speech-language pathologist who has worked with children with speech and language challenges, including those with hearing loss, for 50 years. I was a beginning clinician working in a preschool program for children with hearing loss at the Cincinnati Speech and Hearing Center during a time when there was a widespread rubella epidemic, resulting in a huge increase in the number of babies born with hearing loss (a likely outcome of a mother having in rubella during pregnancy). In those days, hearing aids were important and helpful, but not able to help children hear normally. The sound quality and the large cumbersome receiver was such that many children did not wear their hearing aids and those who did wear them did not receive sufficient high quality sound input. Most of those children are now adults who do not successfully use hearing to communicate because they did not receive high quality sound as children. Thus many adults my think hearing aids do not really work.

Today I am on the Board of Directors of Ohio Valley Voices, a preschool and primary school for children who have cochlear implants or wear hearing aids. Today, the children t Ohio Valley Voices and other programs across the state have the opportunity to listen and talk like normally hearing children because today's hearing aids are totally different from those of 1969. They have MUCH improved technology to produce louder and higher quality sound. They are small, unobtrusive, and easy for children to wear. But children with hearing loss can learn to listen and speak like other children only if they receive hearing aids very early in life, wear them consistently, and have the opportunity to purchase new hearing aids when they break (as they do with children) or when a higher quality hearing aid becomes available.

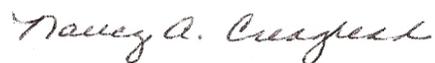
Children who have high quality hearing aids before age three and continue to wear them consistently throughout childhood can be successful in school because they can hear and because they can develop spoken and written language. These hearing impaired children have the opportunity to graduate from high school, enter college and become productive and successful adults. Children who cannot hear adequately

because they do not have access to high quality hearing aids are at severe risk for school failure, social isolation and subsequently inability to find employment and contribute to society.

High quality hearing aids that enable children to listen and talk are expensive. Most families with children with hearing loss do not have the money to buy hearing aids. The additional health concerns that some children with hearing loss encounter are an additional financial burden on these families. Therefore insurance coverage for hearing aids for children is critical for quality of life as children and as adults and for prevention of welfare and other costs to society.

On behalf of the children with hearing loss that I know, as well as those across the state, I urge you to vote for House Bill 243.

Thank you for considering my testimony and the needs of children with hearing loss. I would be happy to provide any additional information or support or answer any questions.



Nancy A. Creaghead, PhD
Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders
University of Cincinnati
4 East Interwood Place
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513 300 2303
nancy.creaghead@uc.edu