

Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the Health Committee,

My name is Jeff Pastore and along with my wife Mary, we are the proud parents of three children and we all live in the quaint Village of Hartville which is located about an hour south of Cleveland between Akron and Canton.

I am speaking today in support of HB 198 which would require insurance plans to cover the cost of hearing aids for children under the age of 22. Our interest in this topic began when our child Nolan, who is with me today, was born in the spring of 2006. Like all proud parents we were thrilled to welcome our new son into our growing family and to us he was perfect in every way. When the nurse completed the APGAR assessment, which counted all of his pieces and parts and makes certain that they were all in the right places, she pointed out a small mark similar to a pin hole in his one ear and suggested for us to keep an eye on our son as he grew because this can sometimes indicate future hearing problems if the ear does not develop properly. As you might imagine we were so busy getting to know our new little man, and no pun intended, that it went in one ear and out the other. As Nolan grew and developed his communication skills appeared to lag those of other children his age.

Fast forward to Nolan's pre-school teacher calling us in for a conference to discuss Nolan touching his classmate's faces and asking us to discuss with him the concept of "personal space". It didn't take long before we found ourselves back in the teacher's office discussing the same issue only this time she recommended a hearing test. To our surprise Nolan was diagnosed with hearing loss in his left ear and he was intuitively trying to read his classmates lips. That is when we met two "angels" in Nolan's life, Doctors Denise Testa and

Carrie Spangler. Dr. Testa diagnosed Nolan's hearing loss in his left ear and Dr. Spangler worked closely with our school district to create the best possible scenario for Nolan to grow and thrive. Once Nolan was fitted with his hearing aid he began to really excel in school. This child, who was late to speak, was now communicating at a higher level. His first grade teacher, Mrs. Nalepa, penned us a letter at the end of the school year and suggested that she would not be surprised if Nolan would someday become a writer because his communication skills were so good. Nolan's fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Warnick, suggested that Nolan apply to Scholastic to become a Scholastic Kid Reporter because of his high level of communication skills. Nolan did apply and was selected. He became the only kid reporter from Ohio and one of only 50 Scholastic kid reporters in the entire world. In fact, Nolan was here in this very capital interviewing Governor and Mrs. DeWine on behalf of Scholastic Press. He also had the privilege of interviewing several candidates for the Presidency of the United States during the last election cycle.

I submit to you that none of this would have been possible if Nolan had not had the benefit of a hearing aid. How can we expect our young people to grow and reach their full potential if we deny them the gift of hearing? More over, how can we justify placing the high financial burden on families whose child requires aids when it is estimated that providing hearing aids through insurance would cost the average Ohio policy member between 5 and 39 cents? I have personally never met an individual who wears hearing aids for cosmetic reasons! Hearing aids are as necessary for a hearing impaired person as glasses are for a vision impaired individual.

On behalf of children and young people like my son, Nolan, you have the ability to change kids lives, please support HB198.

Thank you for your time today and I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have.

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