

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the health committee,

My name is Nolan Pastore, and I am the son of Jeff Pastore who is also testifying today. I live in Hartville Ohio, which is an hour south of Cleveland in Stark County.

I am here 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. As someone who was diagnosed with hearing loss at age 4, I have a clear understanding of how wearing a hearing aid helped with my communication skills, and my general well being. At a young age, I had difficulties hearing everyone in my preschool class, from my teacher to my fellow classmates. I had not been diagnosed with hearing loss yet. Without realizing it, I had taught myself to read lips. In preschool, I often heard “Nolan, please keep your hands to yourself.” However, I wasn’t just being obstinate. I was turning the face of the child next to me, so that I could read their lips, and understand what they were saying. Luckily, my preschool teacher mentioned something to my parents, and suggested I have my hearing tested.

The day I got my hearing aid, I remember being thrilled. It was like the whole world turned up the volume a bit. Suddenly, I wasn’t having problems understanding people, especially in school. My phonetic skills were improving and I noticed a difference in not only hearing, but my ability to speak and interact with others. I was able to rely less on lip reading and more on my actual hearing, which greatly improved confidence. I don’t believe I would be the person I am today if I didn’t have my hearing aid, as I would have

never had the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to succeed. I am thankful that I was born in a family that was able to provide me with my hearing aid. Unfortunately, there are kids not only in Ohio, but around the world that don't have the opportunity to develop to their full potential because they cannot afford a hearing aid. This greatly affects the way they receive information, read, and speak. I can assure you that I do not wear a hearing aid for cosmetic reasons, but instead so I have the ability to understand the people around me at school and at home. I am a freshman at Lake High School and plan to pursue a college degree and career in Computer Science. None of this would be possible without my hearing aid. I hope that my testimony shows you that hearing aids are essential to learning how to communicate, and children should have this opportunity without insurance restrictions. On behalf of all kids with hearing loss, I urge you to support HB 198. Thank you.