



Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and all members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to write in support of House Bill 198. The Hearing Healthcare Alliance of Ohio (HHAO) represents licensed hearing aid specialists and dispensing Audiologists within Ohio.

We would like to thank Representatives Manchester and Russo for bringing this important issue before the legislature. I think most people would assume that hearing aids are covered by insurance like other medically necessary care. However, that is unfortunately not the case.

While we believe all Ohioans deserve appropriate hearing healthcare to be covered by their insurance, House Bill 198 is an important step in the right direction. The bill ensures that those under the age of 22 receive at least a minimum benefit under their insurance plans to cover the cost of hearing aids. Young people in particular benefit greatly from appropriate hearing devices. As you have heard from other witnesses, hearing loss can have sweeping effects on the development and education of young people. Ohioans deserve access to services and devices that improve quality of life, like hearing aids.

The current practice of insurers deeming hearing aids as “elective” or “cosmetic” devices does a disservice to the hearing impaired. Our association can’t imagine any child choosing to need a hearing aid. Without any insurance benefit parents must bear 100% of the expense to give their child every opportunity to learn and thrive. Hearing loss is a medical condition. However, many times with proper intervention and hearing aids, those with hearing loss will interact and learn like other hearing able children.

This bill is important because it also recognizes that hearing healthcare isn’t a one stop shop. In order for a hearing aid to have maximum impact to the patients, it is imperative for the patient to have comprehensive post fitting care. This bill allows for those services to also be covered as part of the insurance benefit.

The Hearing Healthcare Alliance of Ohio urges support of HB 198.

Sincerely,

Terri Samuelson, President