

House Bill 198 – Proponent Testimony

To require health plan issuers to cover hearing aids and related services for persons twenty-one years of age and younger and to designate these changes Madeline's Law

Ohio House Health Committee: Camille Warren

December 13, 2022

Chairman Lipps, Vice-chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee: I am grateful for the opportunity to address the committee in support of House Bill 198.

Hearing aid legislation is a personal issue for my family. I have four children, and the oldest three all have moderate hearing loss. They are currently ages 19, 16, and 12. Over the course of their lives, my family has purchased twenty-two hearing aids, over one hundred ear molds, and had approximately eighty-four audiology visits. For a family like mine, these costs can add up to approximately \$14,000 annually – a cost which is not covered by insurance, and as such doesn't count towards deductibles or out-of-pocket maximums.

Hearing aids offer my children access to their community – and my kids have an amazing community in our hometown of Hilliard Ohio. My oldest hard-of-hearing child is now a college sophomore at Rochester Institute of Technology, where she is studying Biomedical Sciences and Applied Spanish Language. She has gained acceptance to medical school at SUNY Upstate Medical University. My second hard-of-hearing child is a high school sophomore at Hilliard Davidson High School. She plays clarinet in the marching and symphonic bands, is taking three AP classes, and was recently accepted into Rotary Youth Exchange to study abroad next school year. My third hard-of-hearing child is in seventh grade at Hilliard Weaver Middle School. He plays trumpet in symphonic band, is on the wrestling team, and has a 2nd degree black belt in taekwondo.

My kids give back to their community. They volunteer, they advocate, and they care. This legislation is an opportunity for their community to see them, recognize them, and validate that their contributions are important. Without their hearing aids, my children would struggle to participate fully in the community that they love so much.

In 2020, my son Toby had a civics assignment in his 5th grade classroom. Some of you may remember it – he sent ear plugs to every member of the Ohio House and encouraged you to consider hearing aid legislation and the impact of even mild hearing loss. Think of kids like Toby when you consider this legislation. I encourage you to pass it out of committee today and continue its momentum to the floor vote. It is vital to the success of children like mine.