

Dear Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, and Ranking Member Liston,

Health Committee of the Ohio House

I write to you today as a citizen of Ohio and as a mother. My son, Harrison, was born with Down syndrome. About 60-80% of children with Down syndrome have some type of hearing loss. A few years ago, Harrison had large holes in his ear drums which prevented him from hearing normally. At the recommendation of our audiologist, we purchased hearing aids for him. Each hearing aid was \$2000 plus hearing aid molds, appointments for fittings, and checkups. Our insurance covered \$500 total of these fees.

My husband and I have so many dreams for Harrison. We want him to be independent, productive, and have a fulfilling life. We expect him to graduate high school and go on to post-secondary education. Helping Harrison hear helps him reach these goals. Without hearing aids, Harrison cannot hear subtle speech sounds. Given his existing developmental delay and large tongue typical of people with Down syndrome, the inability to hear such sounds would cause further speech delays. The ability to communicate is essential for Harrison to reach his goals.

I am hoping that you will agree that children like Harrison should not go without hearing aids simply because their parents cannot afford them. The expense of hearing aids is minimal compared to the expense of increased dependency on government assistance when a child cannot grow into a productive adult. I appreciate your previous support for children with Down syndrome and I am hoping that you will vote in favor of HB198.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Monica C. Schneider