

Chairman Lampton, Vice-Chairman Barhorst, Ranking Member Miranda and members of the House Insurance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 152 (Madeline's Law) which would require health benefit plans to provide coverage for hearing aids and related services for Ohioans under 22 years of age.

My support of this legislation is both personal and professional. As a parent to a child with hearing loss, I am currently in the process of trying to replace a broken hearing aid. This has been my first experience with being told that the purchase of a critical tool for my daughter's success will not be covered by my insurance in any way. Additionally, I am a speech and language pathologist, working in a school district where at least 70% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Several of my students have hearing aids, but struggle to maintain them financially.

I support this legislation because hearing is the key to speech and language development. Research suggests that children who are born deaf or acquire hearing loss very early in life who receive appropriate interventions, like hearing aids, within six months of age are at par with their hearing peers in terms of language development by the time they are five years old. Additionally, by the time a child with hearing loss graduates from high school, more than \$400,000 per child can be saved in special education costs if the child is identified early and given appropriate educational, medical, and audiological services.

Again, I encourage you to support HB 152. Thank you for taking the time to consider my position in support of this important legislation.