

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.

Good morning. My name is Alexis Klugo. I am a junior at Sycamore High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I am 17 years old. I stand before you on behalf of all kids with hearing loss in Ohio, including myself. I was diagnosed at birth with hearing loss and have been wearing hearing aids since I was eighteen months old, and they are a significant part of my everyday life. I wear them from the time I wake up to when I go to sleep.

On a school day, I prepare for my day and say good morning to my parents. My hearing aids allow me to hear their response. At school, I sit in my classes, the bell rings, and my teachers begin class. As that day's lessons commence, my hearing aids allow me to hear the bell, the teacher's lecture, and my peers' questions that follow. Throughout the day, I chit-chat with my friends. We catch up on our weekends, talk about new places we have eaten, a book, and anything and everything that comes to mind. My hearing aids allow me to be able to communicate with my friends. We often take our routines and the simple parts of our day for granted, and without my hearing aids, I could not effectively participate in class or communicate with my teachers, peers, friends, and family. Hearing aids are extremely expensive, and all costs associated are paid for out of pocket. I recognize that I am incredibly fortunate that my parents can provide the resources I need to succeed, but the cost of hearing aids is outrageous, and many families cannot afford them. HB 152 gives hard-of-hearing children in Ohio the equal opportunity to be successful. Please support this bill and the future of children with hearing loss in our state. Thank you for your time.