



Dear Chair Lampton,

My name is Jen Powers Alge and I am a Regional Director at the Arc of Ohio. I advocate for people with disabilities and their families in Southwest Ohio. I have two children with developmental disabilities myself. My son, Jack, has autism and epilepsy and my daughter, Evie, has Down syndrome. I am an attorney by trade and have found that my passion lies in public policy for people with disabilities and caregivers like me.

I am writing you today to endorse House Bill 152 which requires health plan issuers to cover hearing aids and related services for persons birth to age twenty-one, otherwise known as Madeline's Law. Because many children who need hearing aides have developmental disabilities, the Arc of Ohio believes this bill would help many families in need in Ohio.

For children, hearing is the key to literacy as well as learning spoken language, performing academically and engaging socially. 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. Research shows that by the time a child with hearing loss graduates high school, more than \$400,000 per child can be saved in special education costs if the child is identified early and given appropriate education, medical and audiological services. Twenty-seven other states have passed legislation requiring insurance coverage for hearing aids for children (range 5 to 39 cents per member per health plan).

My daughter, Evie, has mild hearing loss and we monitor her hearing very closely. She may need hearing aids in the next few years. Many kids with Down syndrome would benefit from hearing aids but in too many cases the costs are too high for families.

The Arc of Ohio supports this bill and encourages you and all members to pass this important legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jen Powers Alge  
Regional Director  
The Arc of Ohio  
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