

**House Insurance Committee**  
**House Bill 152**  
**Proponent Testimony**  
**June 6, 2023**

Chairman Lampton, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Miranda, and members of the House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on House Bill 152. Additionally, thank you to Representative Weinstein and Representative Young for introducing this very important legislation that would help many families across our state. My name is Katherine Miltiades and I am writing to ask the committee to support HB 152, which would require commercial insurance plans to cover the cost of hearing aids up to \$2500 per ear every four years for children up to age 21, and favorably report this bill.

I am writing to you today as the current president of the Ohio Academy of Audiology (OAA). OAA represents hundreds of audiologists in the state of Ohio through our membership and we see firsthand how hearing loss impacts an individual at every stage of life.

When dealing with insurance providers to obtain authorization for hearing aids, audiologists are often asked by insurance companies to consider the “cosmetics” of hearing aids. This has always been so curious to providers because the conversation surrounding pediatric device selection, prescriptive strength and programming algorithms never relies on how this will look. The conversation rather always focuses on what environments the child is in that will require improved access to the sounds around them. Environments that come to mind are: improved access to a teacher’s voice in a noisy classroom, access to safety sounds when at the bus stop or playground, the ability to participate with peers in a playgroup with full inclusion, consideration for a sports team providing equal access to the coach’s directions, or simply the ability to hear your family conversations without missing a beat. These are not cosmetic choices, but rather rights a child has to access the information and conversations that support their academic and social-emotional well-being.

Research has provided us much data to support that children must be identified with hearing loss early and intervention subsequently provided to develop language on par with their hearing peers. We have invested in state programs that support this through universal newborn screening programs as well as early intervention within Ohio. Hearing aids are a covered product under Ohio Medicaid and as part of the authorization process we must attest to their medical necessity. We are already doing the right thing in Ohio; we simply need to expand this to ALL children so we can be a leader in health equity.

More than two dozen states have passed legislation requiring insurance coverage for hearing aids for children. Data from those states shows that the increase in the premium per member per health plan has been minimal to help cover these life-changing devices and services (the increase ranges from five to 39-cents per member per health plan).

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

Sincerely,



Katherine Miltiades, AuD  
Ohio Academy of Audiology President