

House Insurance Committee
House Bill 152
Proponent Testimony
June 7, 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 Lindsey Cameron 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 have been a Pediatric Audiologist for nearly 20 years, including 13 years and counting at a children's hospital in Columbus, Ohio. In my career, I have seen the difference hearing aids make in the lives of children with hearing loss. I have seen how crucial amplification is for education and speech-language development. I have also seen the burden that the cost of hearing aids can be for so many families.

Approximately three in 1,000 babies are born with permanent hearing loss, making hearing loss one of the most common birth defects in America. Many families whose children are identified with a hearing loss at their infant hearing screening cannot afford the price of hearing aids for their child; the Better Hearing Institute sets this number at one out of five parents (22%). For children, hearing is the key to learning spoken language, performing academically, and engaging socially. Research shows the annual average education expenditure per student for a child with hearing loss is more than twice that for a child without a disability and the estimated lifetime economic cost of hearing loss in children is more than \$400,000 per child. These costs can be avoided if a child is identified early and given appropriate educational, medical, and audiological services.

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,

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