



REPRESENTATIVE CASEY WEINSTEIN  
HOUSE DISTRICT 34

Senate Insurance Committee  
HB 152 Sponsor Testimony  
November 13, 2024

Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Senate Insurance Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of House Bill 152, also known as Madeline's Law. This bill is a critical step forward in improving early childhood development and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to thrive and succeed for a lifetime.

Madeline's Law is specifically designed to address the issue of hearing loss in children, which is a disability that affects a small percentage of our population but can have a major impact on their ability to communicate and learn. Ohio already mandates hearing screenings for newborns, but by ensuring that children have access to early intervention services and hearing aids, this bill can help mitigate the negative effects of hearing loss and promote positive outcomes for Ohio's youth.

As some of you probably know, the cost of providing these services and devices can be a major barrier for Ohio families—costing as much as \$6000 for a pair of hearing aids, not including fittings or visits to the audiologist. This is especially burdensome for those who may already be struggling financially. Madeline's Law would require that health benefit plans cover up to \$2500 per individual hearing aid every 48 months for enrolled Ohioans under the age of 22. The bill also

includes required coverage for related services such as fittings and hearing exams. Passing HB 152 would add Ohio to the list of 25 other states that already require insurance companies provide hearing aid coverage for children. By investing in the early development of our children, we are helping to build a stronger and more prosperous Ohio for generations to come. I believe that the return on investment in this area is significant and can have a lasting impact on our state's future.

Madeline's Law was originally introduced in the 133<sup>rd</sup> GA and named for Madeline Rohlin, whose parents approached me and explained their struggles affording hearing aids for their young daughter due to lack of insurance coverage. It was reintroduced last General Assembly and passed out of the House Health Committee with a vote of 15 to 2 before the GA ended, but it never made it to the House floor.

Now, this GA we made even more progress, finally getting it out of committee onto the House Floor where it passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Today, as I stand before all of you, I am reminded of the work many have put in all these previous years, all the people that came to testify - families, doctors, and policy experts. I think about Madeline, her family, and all the other families in Ohio impacted by the current classification of hearing aids as "cosmetic devices". Hearing aids are not cosmetic, but necessary medical devices that many children need to thrive. This legislation has been years in the making, and I remain hopeful that this Committee will continue to build on the progress we've made and help push this bill across the finish line - effectively ensuring every child can hear in our state.

Thank you again for your time and consideration of this important issue. I urge you to please support our Deaf and hard of hearing community through House Bill 152. I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

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