

Hello, my name is Carson Locher. I am a 13-year-old boy who was born with CHARGE syndrome, which happens to be a leading cause of Blindeafness. As you can see, I wear glasses, this is because I am legally blind in my left eye and have a mild vision issues on the right. My glasses are not cosmetic, which brings me to the reason I am here today. I am also deaf. I am completely and totally deaf in my right ear, and due to this I needed a cochlear implant. On my left side I have moderate hearing loss and require a hearing aid. Both of these did not come easy as my insurance denied it time and time again. Finally a grant was awarded to me for my cochlear implant and surgery for that, my hearing aid took longer to get, insurance denied it and would never approve it, there were no grants available and after a great ENT team fought for me, the company who did my cochlear implant “gifted” me a hearing aid, but a demo one, so that I at least had something. This hearing aid has been used for demonstrations COUNTLESS times and should it break I am out of luck. That means bye bye to my hearing. I have read and heard that insurance companies classify hearing aids and or hearing devices as “Cosmetic” funny, that someone out there thinks that hearing is cosmetic. I sure hope that person never has to lose their hearing. I also find it strange that a hearing aid can be classified as such but braces to make your teeth straight are not classified as cosmetic and be covered by insurance. Seems a bit funny now doesn’t it?? Without hearing aids I would not be able to attend a typical school or be in a typical classroom, which by the way I am a straight A student now that I can properly hear. Now lets get into it. What is a hearing aid? A hearing aid is a small electronic device worn in or behind the ear that amplifies sound, allowing people with hearing loss to better hear and participate in conversations by making sounds louder and clearer. It typically consists of a microphone to pick up sound, an amplifier to increase its volume, and a receiver to deliver the amplified sound into the ear canal. Without my hearing aids I would not be able to hear correctly, I would not be able to speak as well as I do today. You see there was a time when only my mom could understand what I was saying and even at times with her there were times we would both cry because she couldn’t figure it out and I would be frustrated with her and the world around me. Can you see now how hearing aids were needed and not cosmetic? I am an avid horse rider, barrel racer, and learning how to do mounted shooting (a horse-riding technique in case you didn’t know what that is) HOWEVER without a hearing aid none of this would be possible because hearing is essential for safety. Now some of you may say there is sign language but you CANNOT sign a sound. Which brings me to another point of safety. Without hearing aids, it would not be possible for me to hear a fire alarm, a phone ringing, someone knocking at my door, car horns, train horns or any emergency alert alarm. All which could put me in great danger. It is comical to me that someone out there thinks hearing is cosmetic. I challenge anyone who does to and all of you to get a pair of noise canceling headphones and wear them for a whole day, at work, at home, in the public and then tell me how it was not having “cosmetic” hearing all day? Now I am not certain

who the exact person it was that said it was cosmetic, but to my knowledge cosmetic means accessories like it's a purse or something. Yet if someone submitted for braces insurance would cover some or all of expense? BUT a hearing aid is "COSMETIC" and not needed?? That is just crazy to me! That is like saying to someone who cannot walk, that they don't need to... but thankfully insurance covers a wheelchair. I understand they are expensive, thousands of dollars, not cheap, like everything else in this world, but I did some research and health insurance companies made 1.7 trillion dollars in the year 2023.... Heck some people pay for health insurance all year and never use it, so that's just pocketed hard earned money from someone and yet medically NEEDED devices are denied and for no good reason. Oh wait its because they are classified as "COSMETIC" Our word of the day. I strongly hope that my testimony can help change the minds of insurances around OHIO to help babies, children, like me, and adults with the coverage of hearing aids who do not have the privilege of hearing on their own, like maybe you can! Thank you for allowing me to speak and be an advocate and voice for myself and those who struggle with hearing like me!