

Jessica Schwartz
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November 18, 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jessica Schwartz and I am writing this letter on behalf of the proposed Madeline's Law and my 10 year old daughter, Parker. Parker was diagnosed with Sensorineural Hearing loss in May of this year. As a result of this, my daughter now needs hearing aids. Parker was diagnosed with mild to moderate hearing loss in her right ear and moderate to severe hearing loss in her left ear. Sensorineural hearing loss is not reversible. This will be something that she will have to deal with for the rest of her life.

During this process I found out that my health insurance company did not cover the cost of hearing aids. This is unacceptable. It is very disheartening to find out that they are considered to be "cosmetic" or "elective". How is a device that is supposed to help someone hear considered to be cosmetic or elective? There are so many long term effects of hearing loss if a child is not aided. Individuals are more likely to experience brain atrophy which can lead to dementia. Delayed language, academic challenges, decreased social isolation, depression, the list goes on. If a child is unable to hear speech how can they recognize it? If a child is not able to hear, how can they access the curriculum in school? There are so many things that a child or a person with hearing loss cannot do or have access to without hearing aids.

At least 26 of our 50 states mandate health insurance companies to provide coverage for hearing aids, with 5 of those states also mandating coverage for adults. The cost of my daughter's hearing aids was around \$4,040. She will need new hearing aids every 3-5 years. There are a few programs available like OHAAP and BCMH, but not everyone qualifies for these programs. Without this mandate children will be affected. As a parent to a child that needs hearing aids, I cannot afford to buy new aids every 3-5 years. This will put a financial strain on my family and many families that are in a similar situation to mine.

Please take this law into consideration. It would be a small ray of hope for families. It will give a child the confidence that they need to navigate school. It would allow children the best quality of life they deserve. It would give parents the peace of mind, instead of them worrying about how they are going to pay for hearing aids.

As a parent to a child that now needs hearing aids for the rest of her life, I please ask you to think about how this and how it would be life changing. This would provide families with the

opportunity to help their child. There are many families out there that cannot afford to buy hearing aids for their child and there are many families who do not qualify for assistance.

Sincerely,

Jessica Schwartz