



Representative Susan Manchester

Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 198

House Health Committee

April 27, 2020

Good morning Chairman Lipps, Vice Chairman Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 198, Madeleine's Law, legislation that will require health plan issuers to cover hearing aids and related services for individuals twenty-one years of age and younger.

Ohio law often considers hearing aids as a "cosmetic device," exempting the devices from health insurance benefit coverage. Current statute places a significant financial burden on children and families who are or have loved ones who are deaf or hard of hearing. The ability to hear is not cosmetic. Hearing is critical to a child's growth and development and is the foundation for cognitive understanding, the ability to learn, and language development.

House Bill 198, Madeline's Law, would require health plan issuers to cover hearing aids and related services for persons twenty-one years of age and younger. The bill specifies the coverage to provide up to two thousand five hundred dollars towards one hearing aid per hearing-impaired ear every forty-eight months. The cost of coverage for hearing aids for individuals aged twenty-one and younger will better equip children and young adults for their future and thereby substantially deter future costs to families and the state. Providing access to hearing devices throughout the early development, adolescent and young adult stages of an individual's life, affords such individuals the necessary tools and abilities to grow and succeed.

House Bill 198 will greatly benefit Ohio's families and children by providing access to not only hearing aids, but access to a growing future. I am grateful to Representative Russo for her

partnership on this important legislation and look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.