

HB 243- Proponent Testimony by Laura Rickey, Au.D. CCC-A
House Health Committee
October 23, 2019


Chairman Merrin, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 243. My name is Laura Rickey, and I support HB 243 because I am a pediatric audiologist at a non-profit children's hospital. I see the value that hearing aids and services provide to children every day. It is well documented that children with hearing loss are at a greater risk for social-emotional, academic, and speech and language difficulties than their normally hearing peers. Children will have a better opportunity to maintain awareness of sounds, to localize where sounds are coming from, to learn to communicate, and to meet their potential if they are fit appropriately with amplification. Therefore, I believe it is essential that hearing aids be covered through insurance for children.

Children typically need new hearing aids every 3-5 years. When an infant is diagnosed with hearing loss, the goal is to have them fit with amplification by 6 months of age at the latest. This means children will need approximately 4 sets of hearing aids by the time they are 22 years old. This is an expense that many of the families that I work with cannot afford. They then have to make difficult decisions for their families and prioritize their family's needs.

Hearing aids are necessary for the opportunity for children with hearing loss to develop normal speech and language. This in turn affects students' academics, and in the future, their employment opportunities. If children with hearing loss are given access to amplification at a young age, they are more likely to be independent communicators in the future. Covering hearing aids would not be an investment in these children only now, but it is truly an investment in their future.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony and please feel free to contact me with any questions or if I can be of any assistance. I am available through email at lkr7@zips.uakron.edu.

With gratitude,


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Pediatric Audiologist