What an opportunity is before us today!  An opportunity to make a difference for children with hearing loss.

My name is Missy Osborne and I am here today to support Health Bill 243 because I have a beautiful 8 year old daughter, Natalie, who has hearing loss – mild to moderate bilateral hearing loss.   Her aids are a part of who she is  – in fact they are necessary for her everyday life…from school to church to sports to family time, she depends on her hearing aids.

Because she needs her aids “all waking hours,” wearing them is not optional.  But Insurance does not cover the aids so instead my husband and I depend on payment plans arranged with Cincinnati Children’s Hospital.   Our last purchase, which was three years ago was $5,500.00.   So now we have about 1-2 years left on the life of these aids and then the billing plan will begin all over again.

Let me take you back to the day I was told my 10 week old daughter had hearing loss.  The overwhelming stress and worry about her development and her future was more than this first time mom could handle.  Then to only start worrying about providing the necessary equipment and therapies.    Not only are hearing aids so expensive but the testing, supplies like molds and care items and therapies all add up which is not covered by insurance.  One hearing test will cost us $700 out of pocket and last year we had 3 tests.  Do you know what it is like to put off repeating a hearing test cause you haven’t paid for the last test?   When you look at your child and know you are letting them down while the bills for testing, ear molds and supplies are adding up quick.

By supporting Health Bill 243 you are investing in children.  You will make it possible for every child who is in need of Hearing Aids to receive the equipment they need.  You will help these children with their development of full, rich, verbal language. Children must be able to tune into the speech sounds around them. Studies show the use of hearing aids keeps the mind healthy, results in better self-esteem, and helps children achieve developmental markers. Numerous studies have shown hearing aids help with the  improvement in attention, understanding directions, classroom participation and school behavior.  With  proper and early intervention, children with hearing loss can grow up to be as successful and happy as they would have been without hearing loss.

You already know that [hearing aids](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.starkey.com_hearing-2Daids&d=DwMFaQ&c=kRQx1TXm_68pneFHvOZEGQ&r=ElwqJO-nmRKeIOFged-_ouKdgjTgI7_aBUsSzqNIYAI&m=yI1OvQ2Ky7YPmd_3sRimOHQLghArgX-d4M3JJBMlOiQ&s=CRAnhzcoTuqn1ah5NFjP1_JHcioGCT2k-5gcTZQXpzE&e=) can improve hearing, learning and communication. But did you know they can also enhance safety?  Besides improving balancing issues that comes with hearing loss, hearing aids increases awareness.  Hearing is an important sense for environmental awareness and preventing accidents. Hearing aids can help an individual detect hazards in their surroundings, such as automobiles, sirens, and dangerous situations. Hearing can also help you recognize where a potential danger may be coming from. Safety during daily activities is important for the child and parent’s sense of security.

Also safety at home is important. A knock at the door, beeping from the oven– are quiet, and may go unnoticed to a child with hearing loss who is unaided. Watching television or listening to the radio at an increased volume further increases the chance that a person with hearing loss may miss an important, yet quiet, domestic sound, such as an oven timer. In cases of severe hearing loss, a person may even miss a louder noise such as a smoke alarm. Feeling secure and having peace of mind at home requires being able to hear the sounds around you, and distinguish between normal sounds and sounds of alarm, such as a burglar. This is where hearing aids can make a world of difference.

By passing Health Bill 243, you are investing in children.  You are making a way for every child with hearing loss to be aided.  You are providing an opportunity for a child, such as my daughter Natalie, to have the opportunity be to mainstreamed in school.  You are providing a safer environment for hearing loss children.

Chairman Lipps, and members of the House Health Committee: Thank you for the opportunity share my support of Health Bill 243.   I truly hope you will consider passing this Bill and investing in our children.

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