

Written Testimony of Kim Baich
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The Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio

For H.B. 212
Expand Eligibility- Program for Medically Handicapped Children
Representative Fraizer and Representative Liston
4th Hearing
May 27, 2021

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony for H.B. 212 that would support young adults with special healthcare needs by expanding the eligibility for the Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH) program to individuals aged 26 and younger. Currently the age limit is 21.

On behalf of the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio, I would like to speak in support of increasing the age of CMH benefits through age 26. Many individuals with Down syndrome would benefit from the extended services for hearing loss, metabolic disorders (thyroid conditions) and congenital heart disease. All of these conditions can impact our population at any age. At age 18, my son with Down syndrome was diagnosed with a substantial hearing loss that required the use of hearing aids. We were fortunate to have the coverage of CMH to cover those costs. For families that get that diagnosis after the age of 21, that cost is being covered through personal insurance, which many of our families do not have. The reality for those families is that their loved one goes without hearing aids and the hearing loss is never addressed and the condition worsens. The same can be said for metabolic disorders and issues related to congenital heart disease.

DSACO strives to increase health outcomes for all individuals with Down syndrome and to remove as many barriers as possible for our families to access the best possible care. Increasing the age of CMH eligibility to age 26 will certainly help many of our families, who are already overburdened with healthcare issues and increasing healthcare costs. Health issues do not automatically go away after age 21. Increasing the age limit to reflect what health insurance companies offer families makes sense.

Raising a child with a disability is challenging. Many times that comes with a lifetime of health issues that drain the bank accounts of our families. Adding 5 years to the eligibility to receive CMH is big for our families. Please consider supporting this much needed legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.