

REVENUE: No revenue impact  
FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

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Action: Do Pass  
Vote: 9 - 1 - 0  
Yeas: Bruun, Cannon, Dembrow, Garrett, Harker, Kennemer, Kotek, Thompson, Greenlick  
Nays: Maurer  
Exc.: 0  
Prepared By: Roxie Cuellar, Administrator  
Meeting Dates: 4/10, 4/22

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Requires insurers to provide coverage for hearing aids for children under 18 years of age when prescribed, fitted, and dispensed by licensed audiologists and approved by licensed physicians. Establishes maximum benefit amount of \$4,000 every 48 months. Prohibits insurers from imposing financial or contractual penalty on audiologist if insured opts to purchase hearing aid priced higher than the benefit allowance if insured pays the difference. Applies to insurance policies or certificates issued on or after the effective date of the Act.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Effect of hearing aids on speech and learning for young children
- Cost of hearing aids for families with insurance
- Impact of additional insurance mandates
- Public cost of failing to provide hearing aids to children with partial hearing loss

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:** No amendment.

**BACKGROUND:** Oregon has a newborn screening system for detecting hearing problems in infants. Cochlear implants are covered by insurance for children with complete hearing loss, but insurers often do not pay for hearing aids for partial hearing loss. In Oregon, it is estimated that 1290 children have hearing needs that are not currently being met. There is a close correlation between hearing and communication, as well as social and cognitive development. Nondisposable hearing aids typically cost between \$1,000 to \$2,500 each, with additional costs for batteries and ear molds. They typically need to be replaced every two-three years.