



House Committee on Health Care
March 8, 2017 – HB 2392: Statement of Support

HB 2392: Support Access to Sound for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

What is the problem?

Current hearing aid mandate is limited in scope, and impedes the provision of hearing services and technology for families of children with hearing loss.

The current mandate covers hearing aids for children, but NOT...

- Initial and **on-going hearing evaluations** for children, a necessary precursor to hearing loss treatments
- The essential **fitting and verification procedures** needed to dispense hearing aids
- The essential **supplies required for regular hearing aid use**, including earmolds, batteries, and repairs
- The essential **equipment needed to function** in everyday listening and learning situations, including Assistive Listening Devices, Hearing Assistive Technology, FM/DM Systems
- **Cochlear implants**, when medically necessary, including supplies and technical procedures associated
- **Replacement hearing aids when needed** to keep up with changes in the child's hearing status, listening needs, and available technology

What will this bill do?

Change current hearing aid mandate for private insurance providers to include the missing components listed above.

Establish two new requirements to ensure families are able to access hearing services and technology:
Insurance companies WILL...

- **Assign a Case Manager** to each family when their child is diagnosed with permanent hearing loss. The Case Manager will describe hearing benefits to the family and help them navigate the insurance system.
- **Contract with a requisite number of pediatric audiologists** to ensure rapid access to services. A survey of audiologists' ability to perform hearing evaluation, hearing aid fitting, cochlear implant programming, and ALD/HAT provision for children of all ages must be conducted to ensure services are available for all age ranges and services.

Who will benefit from this bill?

Oregon's children with hearing loss and their families:

- Children will gain access to services and technology **they need to succeed.**
 - Without consistent, clear access to sound, children fall behind in language acquisition, literacy, academics, social skills, and ability to contribute to society.
- Families will experience **less stress, financial and travel burden** when seeking hearing care for their child.
- Families will have increased access to hearing care by **alleviating shortage of pediatric audiologists.**

Oregon's Educational System and Economy

- Children who **do not** receive treatment for hearing loss cost the education system an additional \$420K and are faced with overall lifetime costs of **\$1 million in special education, lost wages, and health complications.**
- However, with appropriate early intervention, children with hearing loss can be mainstreamed in regular elementary and secondary education classrooms **offsetting the above costs.**
- Untreated hearing loss results in a loss of household income of up to \$30K per year, and this has a negative economic impact in Oregon due to **unrealized taxes.**