

To: House Health Committee
From: Ilia Fong, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA
Date: 3/7/2017
Re: HB 2392

Chair Greenlick, Members of the committee

For the record, my name is Ilia Fong and I am a pediatric audiologist with the Providence Children's Development Institute at St. Vincent. I am writing to express my support for HB 2392.

For the majority of us, we don't think about "hearing" until we can't hear. We take for granted that we grew up hearing car horns stopping us from stepping in the road; hearing our parents, siblings, and friends connecting with us through the stories we tell each other; or hearing our teachers teach us math, reading, art, and science so we can grow up inspired to learn and be productive members of society. When children have hearing loss, of any degree, it affects how they take in the world around them. It puts them at serious risk for delays in speech and language development, difficulties in creating social connections, learning in the classroom, and environmental safety awareness.

We've come a long way the last couple decades in our pediatric audiologic care. Newborn hearing screenings and diagnostic technology for early identification of hearing loss have given us the opportunity to provide amplification at an earlier age, reducing the risk of developmental delays and *neurodevelopmental delays* caused by hearing loss.

Parents of children with hearing loss already have a long process of grievance, acceptance, learning, and advocacy for their child. I feel deeply for my families who make just enough not to qualify for financial assistance or Medicaid, but are still struggling to make ends meet. I want to ease their way. I want them to focus on providing a supportive listening environment for their child rather than worrying about what extra job they need to pick up to be away from their child so they can pay for their child's hearing aids, non-traditional hearing aids such as bone conduction hearing devices, recurring costs for batteries, regular office visits to monitor hearing, and additional accessories that may be needed when hearing aids are not enough.

We need to support these families better. We need to set an example, and mandate insurance companies to cover amplification for children. Getting these children with hearing loss on the best path for development with amplification and early intervention will reduce future costs for private therapies, educational costs for school system, and enable these children to grow up confident and successful.

Please, consider the future of these wonderful children and their families.

Ilia Fong, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA
Pediatric Audiologist

Providence Children's Development Institute-West
9135 SW Barnes Road, Suite 161
Portland, OR 97225
Direct: 503-216-5979
Scheduling: 503-216-2339
Fax: 503-216-6813
Ilia.fong@providence.org