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Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

We are reaching out to you representing Oregon's audiology community. Our organization is made up of approximately 150 future, current, and past hearing healthcare professionals. We work in a large variety of healthcare and educational settings and with people across the lifespan. We are writing to you in support of HB 4104, access to sound for children who are deaf/hard of hearing. Pediatric and educational audiologists are key providers for these children and their families. These professionals diagnose hearing loss, provide intervention, and are often the first professional that families have contact with at diagnosis. Our pediatric and educational audiologists see first-hand the limitations of our current insurance mandate.

Oregon state has mandated newborn hearing screenings for infants because we know that children with hearing loss identified at birth, receive a diagnosis by age 3-months, and are provided intervention no later than 6-months have the best opportunity in developing age appropriate speech, language, and academic skills. However, the cost of intervention tools such as amplification, assistive technology, and various accessories required for success often pose a barrier to families. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), kids with mild to moderate hearing loss, on average, achieve one to four grade levels lower than their peers with normal hearing, unless appropriate management occurs. Access to these intervention tools along with educational support are imperative for personal and academic success for these children.

Current insurance requirements leave children without adequate services and devices to help them succeed in school and life. HB 4104 will provide children and their families with necessary and timely access to pediatric audiologists and assistive listening devices to aid with hearing.

The Oregon Academy of Audiology membership represents a majority of the audiology community who serve these children and families and we strongly encourage the members of the House Committee on Health Care, to support HB 4104.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Oregon Academy of Audiology

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