

Hello. My name is Brandie Henderson and I am the mother of a child with hearing loss. He received medicine at birth and has had moderately severe hearing loss his entire life. My son was fitted with hearing aids at 7 months old and he just turned 4. Because of his hearing aid use and early interventionists he is able to keep up with his typical hearing peers. Without the hearing aids he would not have the access he needs and we would have been forced to teach sign language and have an interpreter for him. But instead, we are able to use listening and spoken language with him and he will be in a regular classroom with his typical peers with very little assistance needed due to the access that hearing aids and FM systems will grant him. Without our amazing audiologist that is on top of maintaining his hearing and aids we would not be where we are today. This bill is so important for the youth that have this obstacle set before them. His life would be completely different without these things as would ours. What the tax payers would have to spend for him to be successful would also be astounding.

Hearing aids are tools for access just as wheelchairs give people access to daily life. Denying hearing aid coverage should truly be a crime. I have had to battle with insurance companies throughout my child's entire life and this needs to stop. These things should be covered plain and simple because listening and spoken language should be a birth right for these kids and without these important tools they would not be able to communicate in their typical world. To add to this I also find it criminal for insurance companies not covering the items needed for these aids to function. You need regular audiologist appointments and hearing evaluations to make sure the aids are working properly and that hearing is stable. You need batteries and ear molds to actually make the hearing aids work. It would be like having a car without gas which would do absolutely no good at all to anyone, which is what the insurance companies are doing by not covering batteries, ear molds and FM systems. These items are absolutely necessary for the growth and development of these children and I shudder at where my child would be without them. This bill needs to pass and it is something that should have been in place quite some time ago. It ultimately saves money in the long run which is always beneficial to constituents. A full time interpreter for a deaf/hh student can run up to 65k a year for school aged children. With his hearing aids, early access to them, hearing tests and an FM system my child will not need an interrupter and I believe the value of that speaks volumes. This is a common sense law that should be put into effect immediately.

Thank you for your time and I hope you consider passing this bill and moving it forward as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Brandie Henderson
Mother of a child with hearing loss