



February 12, 2018

TO: Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Health Care Committee
FR: Bob Joondeph, Executive Director
RE: HB 4104

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is the designated Protection and Advocacy office for Oregon. DRO provides legal advocacy services to Oregonians with disabilities across the state. Individuals with significant hearing loss are among those we serve.

DRO supports HB 4104 because Oregon's current hearing aid mandate is limited in scope and impedes the provision of hearing services and technology for families of children with hearing loss. It also falls short of the "habilitative" devices and services coverage requirement of the Affordable Care Act. The current mandate covers hearing aids for children, but does not require coverage for:

- 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

HB 4104 will require private insurers to cover the services bulleted above. It will also assure that parents have access to effective case management and an adequate array of appropriate medical services.

HB 4104 will help children to compete and succeed in life. Without consistent, clear access to sound, children fall behind in language acquisition, literacy, academics, social skills, and self-sufficiency. With less stress, financial and travel burdens when seeking hearing care for their child, families have a better chance to stay together and succeed. Adequate insurance relieves school districts of cost associated with special education needs. Thank you for this opportunity to voice support for children who need these vital services.