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Dear Chair of the House Committee on HealthCare:

As a resident of the state of Oregon, I am writing in support of HB 4104: Support Access to Sound for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Our current hearing aid mandate is limited and makes it very difficult for families with children who have a hearing loss to receive services and technology needed. This bill would update the mandate for private insurance providers to include missing components that are not currently required.

The current bill does provide hearing aids for children with hearing loss, but that is not enough. There needs to be initial and on-going hearing evaluations for children. We have a great first step in place in the state of Oregon, the newborn hearing screening to identify hearing loss at birth, but we are not supporting those children and families adequately after they are identified. Being identified with a hearing loss is not a one appointment diagnosis, it requires many appointments with various professionals to ensure that the hearing aids are adjusted properly and that their speech and language are developing appropriately. It is not enough to only identify them and then provide hearing aids.

As a Teacher of the Deaf who works with families who have chosen listening and spoken language for their child I have witnessed the impact on families who have been identified early, aided appropriately and have received the services and support needed in a timely manner. They require fewer services for a shorter amount of time and are able to succeed in school and beyond. However, I have also witnessed the impact of on families who have struggled to receive hearing aids or cochlear implants due to rejection by insurance companies, or having to wait long periods of time to get an appointment with a pediatric audiologist. These children often end up struggling in the long run and require more services and support, costing tax payers more money. Children who do not receive treatment for hearing loss cost the education system an additional \$420,000 dollars and are faced with overall of time costs of \$1 million dollars in special education, lost wages, and health complications. However, with the appropriate early intervention of 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 and the essential equipment needed to function in everyday listening and learning situations, including Assistive Listening Devices, Hearing Assistive Technology, FM/DM Systems children can be mainstreamed in regular elementary and secondary education classrooms offsetting the above costs.

Let's be a state that is progressive and aggressive in the management of our children with hearing loss. Thank you for listening today and taking you time to be an advocate for our children with hearing loss and their families.

Sincerely,



Michelle Proctor, M.Ed., LSLC Cert. A.V.Ed.