

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as a parent of two children that were born with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Our first child received hearing aids at the age of 2 and was diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss. He is currently eight years of age and has made rapid strides with spoken and listening language, though we fear his hearing loss is continually digressing. Our second child was diagnosed at the age of 6 months with moderate to profound hearing loss and received hearing aids just prior to his first birthday. However, the hearing aids were found to provide little, if any, benefit due to the degree of hearing loss. He has since received (the first in December of 2016 and the second in April 2017) bilateral Cochlear Implants. He is currently 4 years of age and is making steady progress. It has been unfortunate for us, during this lengthy journey to provide the tools, technology, and assistance our children need, to find that so many misconceptions and outdated thinking dominates the worldview of so many as it relates to hearing loss. Consider with me that we are living a world where language is the seedbed of ideas, love, empathy, and so much more. However, even though there is a widespread understanding of how important language and hearing is to the development of children, I am staggered at the amount of resistance we have faced through the years. It shocks me to hear professionals express to me that FM Systems and various other hearing technology and services are a "luxury" and thus, not crucial to the success of a child. It has been proven that children with hearing loss face academic, social, and emotional impacts of often monumental proportions.

Thankfully, we like so many other parents, decided to fight for access to technology, services, and education that our two children desperately needed. Yes, we were told that insurance would not provide us with the basic necessity of an FM System, but we pushed to find financial resources, grants, or anything else that would help us secure these essential systems. I can tell you, without a doubt, that our children are further along and have a brighter future because we ensured they get access to all these crucial aspects. We moved across the country, from Alabama to Portland, so that we could get greater access to crucial needs our children had.

I cannot begin to describe how important these services are to us! Tucker-Maxon, a school in Portland that specializes in mainstreaming hard-of-hearing students, has provided us with the crucial services that so many insurance companies view as unnecessary. My children have access to an audiologist that can monitor, and catch, issues with hearing and/or hearing technology. We have access to incredible speech-therapy services that are dedicated to giving their best to our children. Did you know that many insurance companies only allow for speech-therapy once a week and only for an hour? Many parents are faced with costs they cannot absorb! Children need access to more! It's their future! So many families are caught, like we were, in the cracks of insurance coverages and unable to purchase such valuable technology. I know that I don't speak alone, but I speak for every child that wishes he could hear his mother, father, brothers, or friends as they converse in a noisy environment. I know I speak for the mothers and fathers that are pleading, at whatever cost, to have access to life-changing technology, services, and education that will secure the future of their children.

I ask every representative, regardless of political or lobbying persuasion, to vote YES on HB4104. Please vote on this as you would vote for the future of your own children, grandchildren, nephews, and/or nieces. **Vote YES on HB1404.**

Sincerely,

Timothy Charles Hadden

