

A letter to the Senate Committee on Health Care in support of HB4104

Dear Senators:

My daughter, Sofie, was diagnosed with hearing loss in 2000, at the age of 17 months. At that time, hearing aids were not covered by health insurance, so we begged and scraped together the \$7,000 we needed to so that she could learn to talk.

Once Sofie entered school, we found that she could not hear her teachers across the distance of the classroom, even with her powerful hearing aids. Sofie needed something called an FM system, which improved her access to sound by 90% — we actually brought in an audiologist to measure the improvement. An FM system works like a little radio signal that goes from the teacher's microphone directly to Sofie's hearing aids.

The school provided the FM system during the school year, but not during summer, when Sofie needed it to hear her camp counselors. One summer, I charged the extra \$3,000 on my credit card because I knew it was that important to her language development.

Last summer, my daughter graduated from high school with a string of academic honors, college credit and a computer science workshop all lined up. What was not included was the FM system she needed to hear her instructors. Once again, after receiving another rejection letter from our health insurance company, we begged and borrowed an FM system so that she could hear what was going on at her workshop.

The Oregon Legislature previously passed a measure mandating that health insurers cover pediatric hearing aids, but that left kids like my daughter only partway there. Kids with moderate to profound hearing loss really need FM systems and access to pediatric audiologists in order to hear a speaker and learn what comes naturally to every other kid in the classroom.

For one last time, I am begging for help in getting my daughter the technology she needs to get an education, learn a trade and become a contributing member of society.

I'm asking for this measure because access to sound, like everything else in the world, is still subject to the laws of physics. And the laws of Oregon.

Thank you for your action today.

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