

Submitter: Jessie Myszka

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2994

Our son Zachary was born with moderate hearing loss. Thanks to the services of the hospital, Columbia Regional, and advocacy group Hands & Voices, we received an abundance of support. However, the fact that Zachary was able to acquire hearing aids at the age of 6 months was essential. He surpasses developmental milestones for his age (now almost five years old) and charms friendly strangers with his conversations. This would not have been possible without hearing aids.

We appreciate the insurance coverage for pediatric hearing aids because without it, paying their full cost would be a hardship. Possible for us, but a substantial expense. I feel angry when I imagine insurance companies who won't cover pediatric hearing aids sufficiently. Hearing devices can quite literally change the course of a child's life, forever. While not every parent of a hearing-impaired child chooses devices, they should have the option if they prefer it.

In fact, our experiences with our son's hearing aids has convinced us that all hearing aids should be covered by insurance. We see the difference between the grandparent who has hearing aids being engaged and lively, while the other grandparent the same age does not pay attention or interact very much, even though he is just as spry. Research shows that social engagement determines other markers of physical health. But advocating for hearing aids to be covered for all ages would be a different bill and testimony.