

Submitter: Kristy Karsten
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

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Kristy Karsten
House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
HB2994
April 21, 2023
RE: HB 2994

Dear Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

I am writing to ask that you support the passage of HB 2994. I was inspired to become an educator in the field of Deaf Education with the birth of my niece who was identified as Deaf. With 28 years of experience working directly with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and their families, I have seen the positive outcomes and impact that early and consistent access to amplification can have on a child's development and daily access to education, family life, and community.

The passage of HB 4104 in 2018 opened the doors for many children and families to receive hearing aids, cochlear implants and some assistive listening devices through their insurance. Unfortunately, since 2018 we have also seen many insurance companies have either knowingly or unknowingly found ways to avoid coverage or increase families' financial responsibility beyond the spirit of the law.

It is critical that the identified loopholes and barriers such as; limiting the number of earmolds a child can receive in the same calendar year; reimbursing at rates that don't accurately reflect the cost of the service or item (RM systems at \$200, Earmolds at \$6); requiring families to pay their deductible before they'll help pay for hearing aids; covering hearing aids but not the professional services for programming and fitting; only paying for programming of one CI per day (even though most pediatric recipients are bilateral) and not paying for the parts children need to help their hearing devices work: batteries, softbands, chargers, retention solutions, etc. are removed for our students and families through the passage of HB 2994.

I urge you to ensure the passage of HB 2994.

Sincerely,
Kristy Karsten
Deaf Education Program Administrator