

Submitter: Abigail Heringer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2994

My name is Abigail Heringer and I'm submitting this written testimony in support of HB 2994. My mom, Suzie Heringer, and sister, Rachel Heringer are with you today testifying in support of this crucial bill for families dealing with hearing loss.

Both my sister and I were born profoundly deaf. No one else in our family is deaf. In fact, more than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents. There is so much confusion that these families deal with, just like mine did, of figuring out what happens next. With hearing loss, it isn't just the ability to hear that a person loses but it's their ability to speak and understand those around them. While our future path was unknown to my mom at the time, what we did know was how important it was to begin early intervention with our cochlear implants. Thankfully at the time, our insurance covered our cochlear implants and audiologist appointments. For a newly single mother of two deaf girls under the age of 5, this was so crucial for our future success.

Because we were able to receive support from our insurance, my sister and I have grown up to be strong and independent members of society. We both graduated from college with a bachelor's degree (only 18% of deaf and hard of hearing students complete a bachelor's degree or higher). Rachel works full time as an Account Manager for a company in Portland and I've been fortunate enough to make a career on social media where I spend majority of my time spreading awareness of hearing-loss and cochlear implants.

With my platform, I get the opportunity to connect to so many different hearing loss individuals and families. One of the biggest fears from families that I hear is the ability for insurance to cover the costs of cochlear implants and other related costs such as ear molds or audiologist appointments. This breaks my heart because dealing with hearing loss comes with so many challenges and hurdles every single day. For the person experiencing the hearing loss like my sister and I, and for parents of deaf children constantly living in stress and fear of will their child be okay. The last thing that parents should have to worry about is possibility that they are not receiving the most appropriate hearing-loss services for their child or if the costs are too high due to insurance not covering these crucial and necessary costs.

Thank you for the time and hope that this provided some insight into why this bill is so important for families dealing with hearing loss.