

Submitter: Brittany Wilson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2994

I am writing to you requesting your support of HB2994. This bill aims to ensure access to sound for children in the state of Oregon.

As an audiologist, I saw first hand the deleterious effects of poor coverage for necessary hearing devices, assistive technology for classrooms, and insufficient coverage for our clinical services. Even the most determined families cannot overcome these financial barriers. In my experience we saw these families scraping together money for basic technology, or applying for loaner devices or grants to acquire antiquated, refurbished technology, none of which was a long-term solution or of the quality needed for a developing brain, and ultimately put these families at-risk of financial burden. This issue also widens a gap in socioeconomic status, where children from lower income households are not accessing medical or educational services at the same rate due to lacking coverage from insurance. When kids miss out on early access to hearing and language we see them lose out on the most paramount right we have as humans which is to communicate our needs and feelings without barrier. I saw these children fall back in communication, in school, and job opportunities as older adults. This is an addressable issue and we have the opportunity to correct it with the passage of a bill that holds insurance companies to a higher standard both for coverage for this vulnerable population, as well as fairly reimbursing the clinical specialists who provide these necessary services. Audiologists are in short supply nationally and we need adequate reimbursement for their diagnostic and rehabilitative services to ensure a reliable work force. Please show support by voting yes on HB2994