

Submitter: Stephanie Lucas

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2994

I am a mother to a 3 year old girl with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss living in Central Oregon. Our daughter was diagnosed as unilaterally deaf in the first months of her life, and we were told that the statistics show that children do best when they are aided within the first 6 months of life. We were quoted over 4 thousand dollars for a single sided BAHA without insurance, which is a significant financial strain on any family, in particular a family who is coping with the medical bills of a recent birth, continued screening and therapy for a medically complex child, and the financial strain of unpaid parental leave. Our daughter has progressive loss, around her first birthday the loss progressed to her other ear and her device recommendations changed. She was recommended for a cochlear implant - the process of which was quoted at 97k without insurance, as well as a traditional hearing aid now for her right side, quoted at over 2 thousand dollars. Simply put the importance of auditory input, language acquisition and the use of appropriate medical devices as early as possible cannot be overstated. Lack of family finances should never be the reason that a child suffers from language deprivation, educational delays and social isolation - all of which can have lifelong implications on mental and physical wellbeing. Brain development does not wait for insurance to approve a device as medically necessary, we need to improve our legislation to reflect the clear need to support our deaf and hard of hearing children. Thank you for time and consideration of this important issue.