

Submitter: Alex Hutchings

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2994

Hello

My name is Alex Hutchings and I am a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing with Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRESA). I am writing today in support of HB 2994. I work with many students, and have for several years, that come from families that have challenges paying for the necessary hearing technology for their children to be successful. These kids are voracious learners, you can see it in their eyes. They are curious, confident, creative, kind, and an absolute joy to work with, but when they don't have access to the hearing technology they need, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and the needed accessories and support technology, they struggle. To see the light fade from these kids eyes as they become incensed that they are struggling with information they clearly know, but can't access due to their hearing levels, is disheartening. 1 in 10 children who are Deaf are born to those with hearing parents, and those families tend to heavily rely on hearing technology to provide auditory input for their children as they grow. Although auditory input cannot replace language, many families work with early intervention services to provide their children with language as well as auditory access, so that they have the best chance to be successful. However, this is not always the case and many Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing children end up language delayed and behind because of their lack of language access. Although this bill is not a fix all for these challenges, it is a start in providing Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children access to the hearing technology they so desperately need to even have a chance at functioning with grade level peers. Many private insurance companies will find loopholes to not providing the fullest extent of hearing technology necessary for these kids because it saves them money, but I am here to tell you that no amount of saved money should stand in the way of our children having access to information and language. Treating these kids like they are somehow more responsible than adults when it comes to their hearing technology by limiting the amount of earmolds they can get within a year or preventing them from using that technology to its fullest potential because of cost saving measures is shameful and should never have been allowed to stand. These kids deserve to have access like everyone else, and this bill will provide a step in the right direction by allowing for them to be able to have access to the hearing technology they need. If you support Oregon children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, you should support this bill.

Thank you

Alex Hutchings, M.Ed.

Teacher of the Deaf
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