

**To:** House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee  
**From:** Erin & Vivian Bolster  
**Subject:** Support HB 2994

**Wednesday, February 15th, 2023**

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Nelson and Goodwin, and Members of the House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee,

My name is Erin Bolster, my family and I are constituents of Rep. Thuy Tran, and I am writing today to share our strong support of HB 2994.

My daughter, Vivian, started with hearing aids then got cochlear implants at 18 months and 3 years old. It was very difficult to get coverage for her hearing aids with our previous insurer (Blue Cross Blue Shield) because of their coverage at that time. We couldn't afford to pay out of pocket so we decided to switch to CareOregon and have been with them since. Now, Vivian is excelling in a hearing school!

Our youngest here is profoundly deaf - more than 120 dB (decibels) of hearing loss. She got the operation at 10 months old and is now 1 year. Our experience getting hearing aids and the implant with her was easy. She has great insurance.

After seeing our oldest grow up while using the implant and benefiting from it by being able to fit in the hearing world, we were so grateful to have the opportunity to give our other daughter access to those same experiences. Both of our children are also fluent, or learning ASL, so they are able to fully engage with us, their parents.

Please support HB 2994 this session and help give all children across the state access to the same opportunities our two children will grow up with.

And I hope that the committee and the legislature will also consider, in the future, opening up access to coverage of these devices and services to adults. My husband has been using hearing aids for 35 years. He has been unable to get coverage for new hearing aids. So he does not wear hearing aids and has never heard his daughters talk. We must do what we can to support our entire deaf and hard of hearing communities at all ages.

Thank you to the committee for your time reviewing my testimony, our daughter Vivian has a few experiences to share as well (below):

**Vivian's Written Testimony:**

Hello, my name is Vivian. And I look forward to sharing my story.

I have been born and raised in Oregon - and I am deaf. I got hearing aids first, and got the cochlear implant at the age of 18 months and 3 years old. I am currently at a private hearing school in fifth grade.

Even though I'm deaf, I fit in. I fit in because of my cochlear implants. So, implants help me hear better. Recently, I was at a friend's birthday party with my classmates at Dave and Buster's. That was a fun time! I was able to follow along what my friends were doing at the moment and was able to participate with minimal help.

In my opinion, and many others too, I think hearing aids should be covered by insurance. No one should have to pay for hearing aids to help them hear. Thank you.