

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Subject: Support & Fund HB 2994A

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez and Members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means,

I **strongly support** [HB 2994A](#) because it will ensure Oregon's deaf and hard-of-hearing kids get the critical healthcare they need to thrive.

In 2018, the legislature passed [HB 4104](#) which required insurers to cover hearing aids, cochlear implants, and certain assistive listening devices for children to reduce barriers for those with hearing loss. HB 4104 passed almost unanimously through the legislature, showing strong bipartisan support to ensure the well-being of our youngest Oregonians. It set a national model of care for how the state, in partnership with insurers, can support Oregonians who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Since the passage of HB 4104, several issues have come to light, barring children with hearing loss from being able to access these critical services, and forcing families to pay out-of-pocket costs for medical alternatives that are less appropriate. As the director of a pediatric audiology clinic, I know first-hand the struggles families with high-deductible plans face when it comes to affording hearing health care services for their children. It is tough to inspire concern for low incidence issues; only 3 out of 1000 babies will need devices to hear. HB 2994A can do so much for the few families that it will help.

HB 2994A will clarify and expand insurance coverage of hearing aids, cochlear implants, and assistive listening devices for deaf and hard-of-hearing children across Oregon, and ensure the promise the state made to Oregon's children in 2018 is properly implemented.

This bill passed the House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee with unanimous support and has a bipartisan group of co-chief and regular sponsors.

Oregon has an opportunity to invest in the future of our children. That is why I am urging you to fund HB 2994A this session and keep the promise the legislature made to our deaf and hard-of-hearing children five years ago.

Sincerely,

Kim Atwill, Ph.D.
Executive Director
soundSTART