

Submitter: Jennifer Arguinzoni-Ward
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB943
Chair Patterson, Vice Chair Hayden and members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony in support of SB 943.

My four-year-old daughter, Jolene, was born with what we later learned to be cytomegalovirus (or CMV) which resulted in deteriorating and significant hearing loss and deafness. It took three years of fights with doctors and insurance in order to receive an official diagnosis that we could actually seek treatment for. At over three years old, Jolene was diagnosed deaf in her left ear and with severe hearing loss in her right. That is three years that we will never get back and she fights every single day to catch up to her peers.

Upon receiving her diagnosis in March 2024, we were finally able to move forward with our audiologist, Dr. Shelby Atwill and it has been one of the most life-changing experiences, not only for me, but most importantly, Jolene. My once nearly non-verbal child is beginning to learn to speak, understand and explore the world in a way that every parent hopes for their child.

This bill would allow for more direct access and referral processes for these key providers- the specialists with the best and closest understanding of a specialized medical situation and diagnosis. Under current law, audiologists must defer to PCPs who often are very removed from the audiology specialty for referrals and medical records. This adds more phone calls, appointments, and waiting for parents who are already dealing the anxiety of such a significant life change. For Jolene, this would have allowed our trusted audiologist more direct access to her medical records, imaging and genetic testing- this would have also allowed Dr. Atwill to make direct referrals to the ENT when my daughter needed to undergo additional hearing testing and when she ultimately needed to undergo surgery to receive a cochlear implant. This bill just makes sense. Let's trust these highly trained professionals to do what they do best. I urge you to vote in support of SB 943.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Arguinzoni-Ward