

Call to Action for House of Representatives
HB 198 - Children's Hearing Aid Insurance Coverage

Representative Allison Russo and Susan Manchester have introduced HB 198, which would require insurance plans in Ohio to cover hearing aids up to \$2500/ear every 48 months for children age 21 and younger.

We are asking for your help to contact your state representative and urge him or her to support HB 198. Below the sample email is a simple way to find your legislator's contact information.

Here is a sample email to get you started!

Sample email for House Members

Dear [Representative],

{PARAGRAPH I} - INTRODUCTION

My name is [YOUR NAME] and I am from [LOCATION, Ohio]. I am writing to ask the House Health Committee to support HB 198, which would require commercial insurance plans to cover the cost of hearing aids up to \$2500/ear every four years for children up to age 21.

{PARAGRAPH II} – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Include personal information, including your credentials, experience, and personal connection to this issue, i.e., I care about this legislation because I have worked as an audiologist, SLP, teacher, etc. or I am a parent of a child with hearing loss.... I work in X clinic or school....etc.

{PARAGRAPH III} – RATIONALE FOR YOUR POINT OF VIEW (Choose whichever of these rationales “speak” to you and expand with your own personal statements. Do not simply copy these bullet points into your email; “form letters” do not get noticed.)

I support this legislation because:

- Approximately 3 in 1,000 babies are born with permanent hearing loss, making hearing loss one of the most common birth defects in America.
- Many families whose children are identified with a hearing loss at their infant hearing screening cannot afford the price of hearing aids for their child; the Better Hearing Institute sets this number at 1 out of 5 parents (22%)
- For children, hearing is the key to learning spoken language, performing academically and engaging socially.
- Research suggests that children who are born deaf or acquire hearing loss very early in life who receive appropriate interventions, like hearing aids, are at par with their hearing peers in terms of language development by the time they are five years old.

- Research shows the annual average education expenditure per student for a child with hearing loss is more than twice that for a child without a disability and the estimated lifetime economic cost of hearing loss in children is more than \$400,000 per child. These costs can be avoided if a child is identified early and given appropriate educational, medical, and audiological services.
- 24 other states—Kentucky, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Utah, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, Colorado, New Mexico, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Missouri, New Jersey, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Delaware, Oregon, --have passed legislation requiring insurance coverage for hearing aids for children. The premium increase per member per health plan has been minimal to help cover these life-changing devices and services (range 5 to 39 cents per member per health plan).

{PARAGRAPH IV} – CONCLUSION

Again, I encourage you to support HB 198, which is currently pending in the House Health Committee. Thank you for taking the time to consider my position in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

To find out who your Ohio Representative is:

1. Go to www.legislature.ohio.gov
2. On the right side of the home page, look for the “Who Represents Me” box
3. Enter your address with your zip code +4. It is essential that you enter the +4 digits since it will narrow the search down to your exact legislators. If you don’t know your extra 4 digits, go to <https://tools.usps.com/zip-code-lookup.htm?byaddress> and enter your address; it will give you the +4 digits. Once you’ve found your zip +4 on the USPS website, return to the Ohio Legislature website and enter that full address.
4. You will then see the name of your Representative on the left side of the screen on the House District Map (You do not need to contact your Senator at this time).
5. Click on the Representative’s name. This will bring up his/her legislative website.
6. On the left side of the Representative’s individual information page, look for the Representative’s contact information. You will see the Representative’s telephone number for their Columbus office. You will also see a link that says, “Email Representative X.” Click that link and it will take you to the email contact form.

7. Be sure to include your address on the form; this is how the Senator knows that you are a constituent.