



June 8, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bipartisan Group of Legislators Applaud Passage of Bill to Expand Access to Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants for Children

Bipartisan bill affirms the Legislature's commitment to ensuring the health and welfare of our state's deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

SALEM, Ore. - Today, the Oregon House of Representatives passed [HB 2994B](#), a bill that extends coverage of hearing aids, cochlear implants, and assistive listening devices to children.

“I am so proud to have championed [HB 2994B](#) this session alongside my colleagues and a broad coalition of parents, advocates, and providers,” said [Representative Hai Pham](#) (D-South Hillsboro & West Beaverton), the bill’s chief sponsor. “In my work as a pediatric dentist, I aim to ensure kids get the best dental care possible, and like many of my colleagues in the legislature, the well-being of Oregon’s children is of the utmost importance to me. I am honored to work on this legislation to help with another aspect of a child’s well-being, hearing, to ensure their health for years to come.”

Not all children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing choose to get hearing aids and cochlear implants. For some who do, access to these devices can vastly improve their quality of life. Consistent, clear access to sound helps children with spoken language acquisition and reduces barriers in school and their everyday lives.

Five years ago, the legislature hoped to address this issue by passing [HB 4104](#), almost unanimously through both chambers, to require insurers to cover hearing aids, cochlear implants, and certain assistive listening devices.

Unfortunately, several issues cropped up during the implementation of [HB 4104](#). Namely, insurers implemented the bill in different ways, leaving families confused and kids without access to these critical devices and services. Families were forced to pay out-of-pocket costs for less medically appropriate alternatives, and audiologists who perform fitting services struggled to get proper reimbursement.

[HB 2994B](#) provides more clarity in statute of covered services and devices and establishes a process through which children and their families can work together with insurance companies to find the most medically appropriate care.

“Evidence-based policy is of particular importance to me as a legislator, and nothing is more worthy of our attention than giving our children a better shot at life,” said [Representative Charlie Conrad](#) (R-Eastern Lane County), one of the bill’s co-chief sponsors. “When I’ve watched videos of a deaf child hearing for the first time, the look of amazement and joy on their face as a whole new world opens up to them is all you need to see in order to understand that this bill will change lives.”

[HB 2994B](#) will also address affordability issues by waiving the need to meet a deductible before coverage of these devices and services, and extend coverage to children who receive care through the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), and Oregon Educators Benefit Board (OEBB).

“As a pediatrician, this issue is particularly close to my heart, as the health and safety of our state's children is my life's work,” said [Representative Lisa Reynolds](#) (D-Northeast Washington County), a co-chief sponsor. “A child’s access to this necessary care should not be dependent on their parent’s income or their zipcode. [HB 2994B](#) gets us closer to the goal of making Oregon the best and most equitable state for all of our children to grow up.”

Other champions of this bill include chief sponsors [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#), [Rep. Ed Diehl](#), [Rep. Cyrus Javadi](#), and [Rep. Lily Morgan](#), and regular sponsors [Rep. Ben Bowman](#) and [Rep. Thuy Tran](#).

[HB 2994B](#) passed the House 52-2 and now heads to the Senate.

A full recording of the floor speeches from today can be found [here](#) starting at 1:27:32.

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