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January 25, 2011

RE: Senate Bill 20, An Act Expanding Health Insurance Coverage for Hearing Aids.

To Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee

My name is Susan Stumpf and I am a Speech Language Pathologist. I'm ***writing to register my strong support of Senate Bill #17.*** Of specific importance to the population I serve is the coverage for hearing aids for children. The evidence is clear that the ability to hear sounds facilitates the development and refinement of speech in children. Undoubtedly, there would be a core segment of that population who would not need prolonged and intensive Speech Language Pathology services through the school system. The key to decreasing this need is the timely acquisition of hearing aids. Too often, the high cost of hearing aids, copays or deductibles prevents such a timely acquisition and the child's speech and language development suffers.

I implore you to pass Senate Bill #17 in the name of relieving families of a burdensome cost for something so very necessary. Passing this bill will go a long way in decreasing the cost of intervention in schools and lifting children toward a productive adulthood.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

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Hearing Fact Sheet

Quick Statistics Adults

http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick.htm

Approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss.

The NIDCD estimates that approximately 15 percent (26 million) of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds or noise at work or in leisure activities.

There is a strong relationship between age and reported hearing loss: 18 percent of American adults 45-64 years old, 30 percent of adults 65-74 years old, and 47 percent of adults 75 years old or older have a hearing impairment.

Only 1 out of 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one.

Hearing loss is often left untreated : 80 percent of those diagnosed with hearing loss do not seek help. The reason is usually denial, lack of awareness or embarrassment. (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association)

http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Prevalence-and-Incidence-of-Hearing-Loss-in-Adults/

The number of Americans with a hearing loss has evidentially doubled during the past 30 years. Data gleaned from Federal surveys illustrate the following trend of prevalence for individuals aged three years or older: 13.2 million (1971), 14.2 million (1977), 20.3 million (1991), and 24.2 million (1993) (2, 3). An independent researcher estimates that 28.6 million Americans had an auditory disorder in 2000 (4). This estimate is reasonably well within projections from the 1971-1993 trend line that evolved from Federal surveys (5).

Quick Stats Children

http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorders/children.htm

According to Blanchfield, et. al., as many as 738,000 individuals in the U.S. have severe to profound hearing loss. Of these, almost 8% are under the age of 18 (10).

Children who are hard of hearing will find it much more difficult than children who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions, and other aspects of verbal communication (5).

The number of children with disabilities, ages 6-21, served in the public schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B in the 2000-01 school year was 5,775,722 (in the 50 states, D.C., and P.R.). Of these children, 70,767 (1.2%) received services for hearing. However, the number of children with hearing loss and deafness is undoubtedly higher, since many of these students may have other disabilities as well (6). Data by disability are not reported by the Department of Education for ages birth to 5 years.

http://www.hearingconnection.org/hearing_loss_statistics.html