

March, 2015

Joint Committee on Education
Legislative Office Building
Room 3100
Hartford, CT. 06106

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman and esteemed members of the Education Committee:

My son Luke was diagnosed at age 8 with sensorineural hearing loss. My husband and I never fully realized how much his hearing loss impacted him until we played an audio clip from an NPR piece entitled "The Real Sounds of Hearing Loss." Luke's eyes lit up and for the first time it seemed as if a weight was lifted. That was the sound of the cafeteria.

According to the American Academy of Audiology, 1 in 7 or over 14% of school aged children have hearing loss. Late or onset hearing loss can happen at any age. I am testifying before you today to please include important language to our bill to protect our at risk children.

Children attending public preschool programs, Students who can not be screened be referred for a complete medical and audiometric evaluation, Students new to school, Students absent during the audiometric screening, Students referred by a teacher or other personnel, Students referred for an audiometric screening during the previous year but do not have document follow up. Students who are at risk for noise exposure like Band or technical and vocational high schools. Students receiving Special Education and related services, Students who request an audiometric screening and Students who's parents request a screening.

Hearing loss that is left undetected can result in delayed speech and language acquisition, behavioral problems and gaps in academic performance. In fact, many social responses that are related to hearing loss are similar to the diagnostic criteria for ADHD.

Luke is now in 5th grade. I am thrilled to hear he just received Student of the a month. But don't get me wrong. The road to 5th grade was paved with behavioral problems, self contained classrooms, a "safe room", medication and a constellation of mislabeling. We are still trying to fill a reading gap of 4 grade levels. It was not until his hearing diagnosis and the right supports in place that we have seen a tremendous improvement.

In conclusion, when children are not identified and receive intervention, it could cost schools an additional \$420,000 per student and a lifetime cost of 1 million. According to the Journal of American Medical Association teen hearing loss is at epidemic proportions. In 2005-2006, 1 in 5 from the 12-19 year old teen population had hearing loss. That's 6.5 million teens. Please strengthen our hearing screening bill by adding this important language to protect our at risk children. Empower our students and screen for success!

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