

February 12, 2014

Senator Jim Hughes
Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: National Association of Specialty Health Organization Comments in Support of S.B. 257

Dear Chairman Hughes and members of the Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Association of Specialty Health Organizations (NASHO) to support the enactment of S.B. 257. NASHO is a membership organization representing health plans and provider networks that facilitate and support the delivery of specialized healthcare services such as dental, vision, hearing, behavioral health, chiropractic and complementary care, physical therapy, radiology management, and other ancillary services.

Prior to the enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), 17 states required health plans to cover hearing aids for children, and 3 states required health plans to extend this same coverage to adults. Since the enactment of the ACA, medical care addressing hearing needs have widely been considered part of the minimum essential benefits required for rehabilitative and habilitation services. "Hearing aids" are listed as standard health benefit number 36 on HHS's benchmark plan format for each state. Furthermore, to date, 22 states have stipulated hearing aid coverage through their benchmark plans.

Hearing aids can effectively treat 95% of all hearing loss; no other single modality produces equivalent outcomes for patients. Additional compelling research concludes:

- Individuals with untreated hearing loss can lose as much as **\$30K** in annual income
- Adoption of hearing aids mitigates income loss by **90%-100%** for those with milder hearing loss and from **65%-77%** for those with moderate-to-severe hearing loss
- Untreated hearing loss is linked to cognitive disorders, including depression and dementia

Accordingly, NASHO fully supports this legislation as an evidence-based requirement for coverage. We appreciate your consideration of these comments and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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