

Testimony of John Kirimitsu  
Legal and Government Relations Consultant

Before:  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
The Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

April 14, 2022  
2:00 pm  
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference

**Re: SCR 61 SD1      REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF MANDATING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS.**

Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SCR 61 SD1 which requests the auditor to assess the social and financial effects of requiring health insurers to offer coverage hearing aids.

**Kaiser Permanente Hawaii supports this resolution.**

We support asking the legislative auditor to study the social and financial impacts of this proposed mandate for hearing aid benefits. We offer for your consideration a few additional clauses that may make the auditor's study more useful.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to identify the number of residents in Hawaii in the target population who suffer hearing loss based on national prevalence rates, in order to determine who may be impacted by the cost of hearing aids; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to research public and private entities that provide coverage for hearing aids to determine what is currently being used as a standard for frequency of replacement and what, if any, cost limitations are placed on the hearing aid coverage benefit. This research should examine whether different standards are applied to adults compared to children in need of these devices. Entities for this research should

include, but not be limited to, Medicare, Medicaid and health plans in Hawaii, and individuals who need, use or otherwise experience the need for such devices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to examine current medically necessary standards of care used to determine what type of hearing aid best suits an individual with hearing loss. An examination of the existing technology in hearing aids and possible future technology should be examined.

Thank you for your consideration.



April 12, 2022

The Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

**SCR 61 SD1 – Requesting the Auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating health insurance coverage for hearing aids.**

Dear Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members:

The Hawaii Association of Health Plans (HAHP) appreciates the opportunity to testify with **comments** on SCR 61, SD1. HAHP is a statewide partnership of Hawaii’s health plans and affiliated organizations to improve the health of Hawaii’s communities together. The vast majority of Hawaii residents receive their health coverage through a health plan associated with one of our organizations.

HAHP supports the intent of this resolution to request that the State Auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating health insurance coverage for hearing aids. We respectfully request the following amendments as we believe they may be helpful to further refine the Auditor’s study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to identify the number of residents in Hawaii in the target population who suffer hearing loss based on national prevalence rates, in order to determine who may be impacted by the cost of hearing aids; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to research public and private entities that provide coverage for hearing aids to determine what is currently being used as a standard for frequency of replacement and what, if any, cost limitations are placed on the hearing aid coverage benefit. This research should examine whether different standards are applied to adults compared to children in need of these devices. Entities for this research should include, but not be limited to, Medicare, Medicaid and health plans in Hawaii, and individuals who need, use or otherwise experience the need for such devices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to examine current medically necessary standards of care used to determine what type of hearing aid best suits an

[hahp.org](http://hahp.org) | 818 Keeaumoku St., Honolulu, HI 96814 | [info@hahp.org](mailto:info@hahp.org)



individual with hearing loss. An examination of the existing technology in hearing aids and possible future technology should be examined.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SCR 61, SD1.

Sincerely,

HAHP Public Policy Committee

cc: HAHP Board Members

[hahp.org](http://hahp.org) | 818 Keeaumoku St., Honolulu, HI 96814 | [info@hahp.org](mailto:info@hahp.org)

AlohaCare | HMAA | HMSA | Humana | HWMG | Kaiser Permanente | MDX Hawaii | Ohana Health Plan |  
UHA Health Insurance | UnitedHealthcare



April 12, 2022

The Honorable Aaron Ling Johanson, Chair  
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

Re: SCR 61 SD1 – Requesting the Auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating health insurance coverage for hearing aids.

Dear Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members:

Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the intent of SCR 61, SD1, to request that the State Auditor assess the social and financial effects of mandating health insurance coverage for hearing aids. We would like to respectfully offer the following amendments that we believe will assist the Auditor's office to further refine their study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to identify the number of residents in Hawaii in the target population who suffer hearing loss based on national prevalence rates, in order to determine who may be impacted by the cost of hearing aids; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to research public and private entities that provide coverage for hearing aids to determine what is currently being used as a standard for frequency of replacement and what, if any, cost limitations are placed on the hearing aid coverage benefit. This research should examine whether different standards are applied to adults compared to children in need of these devices. Entities for this research should include, but not be limited to, Medicare, Medicaid and health plans in Hawaii, and individuals who need, use or otherwise experience the need for such devices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to examine current medically necessary standards of care used to determine what type of hearing aid best suits an individual with hearing loss. An examination of the existing technology in hearing aids and possible future technology should be examined.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure. Your consideration of our comments is appreciated.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew W. Sasaki', is written in a cursive style.

Matthew W. Sasaki  
Assistant Vice President  
Government & External Relations

**Subject:** SCR 61 SD1

Aloha Representative Kitagawa:

Re: SCR 61 SD 1, REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF MANDATING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS.

This resolution would require the Auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating coverage of hearing aids and submit its findings and recommendations to the legislature by 12/31/22.

While it's required by the Hawaii Revised Statutes, section 23-51, let me remind the committee that a study was completed in 2014 that fulfilled this requirement. Further delay of this financial assistance to purchase hearing aids directly impacts the education, health and quality of life for children and adults who cannot pay for the high cost of hearing aids. With inflation, just to put gas in our cars and the rising cost of food, we can barely make ends meet now.

We kindly ask for your support in passing this resolution.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Nakamichi  
1415 Victoria St #1210  
Honolulu, HI 96822

**LATE**

April 13, 2022

Testimony of Roderick & Eleanor Macdonald  
Submitted to the Hawaii State House  
COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Honorable Representative Aaron L. Johanson, Chair  
Honorable Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Re: SCR 61 SD 1, REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS  
OF MANDATING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS.

Dear Chair Johanson, Vice Chair Kitagawa and Members,

I would like to enthusiastically support SCR 61 SD1, Hearing aids; Auditor to Assess Effects.

This resolution would require the Auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating coverage of hearing aids and submit its findings and recommendations to the legislature by 12/31/22.

With the Russian invasion and 8% inflation, the average family is struggling to put gas in our cars and food on our tables. To add to these basic needs, children and adults experiencing unreliable hearing cannot afford the high cost of hearing aids and decide to go without. This impacts the education, health and quality of life of residents in Hawaii.

We ask for your urgent support in passing this resolution.

Mahalo in advance,

Roderick & Eleanor Macdonald  
60 N. Beretania St., #602  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817