



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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March 23, 2022

LATE

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Senate Concurrent Resolution 61– Requesting the Auditor to Assess the Social and Financial Effects of Mandating Health Insurance Coverage for Hearing Aids

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 61. This resolution requests the auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandating health insurance coverage for hearing aids.

Currently, private health insurance plans provide partial coverage for eyeglasses to correct vision, and some provide partial coverage for hearing aids. Hearing is an equally important sense upon which an individual depends for communication.

Hawaii Revised Statutes §23-51 requires that before a bill is passed to mandate insurance coverage for hearing aids, the auditor must prepare a report that assesses both the social and financial effects of requiring coverage. Please adopt these resolutions so that a bill may be considered by the legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

Testimony of John Kirimitsu
Legal and Government Relations Consultant

Before:
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
The Honorable Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

March 23, 2022
9:30 am
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Re: SCR 61/SR 56 REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF MANDATING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS.

Chair Baker and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on SCR 61/SR 56 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.

SCR-61

Submitted on: 3/19/2022 5:09:51 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/23/2022 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Shimizu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Madam Chair Baker, Mr. Vice Chair Chang, and members of the Commerce and Consumer Protection committee,

I support the idea behind this resolution, but oppose another study since one was already completed in 2014.

Mahalo

March 20, 2022

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

Honorable Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Honorable Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

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

Dear Chairperson Baker, Vice Chair Chang and Members,

I would like to support with reservations SCR 61, 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.

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 negatively impacts the education, health and quality of life for children and adults who cannot pay for the high cost of hearing aids. With the Russian invasion and inflation, just to put gas in our cars and the rising cost of groceries, the average family can barely make ends meet now.

We kindly ask for your support in passing this resolution.

Mahalo,

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