

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 03 2023

RE: S.B. No. 609
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2023
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection and Ways and Means, to which was referred S.B. No. 609, S.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HEARING AIDS,"

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require health insurance policies and contracts issued on or after January 1, 2024, to provide coverage for the cost of hearing aids at a minimum of an unspecified amount per hearing aid for each hearing-impaired ear every thirty-six months.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Disability and Communication Access Board and twelve individuals. Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Hawaii Employer-Union Health Benefits Trust Fund Board of Trustees, and Hawaii Medical Service Association.

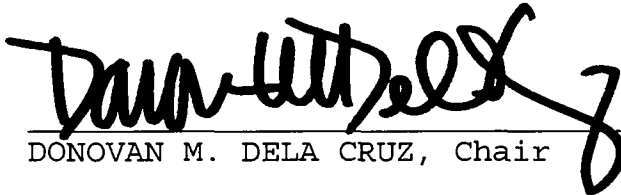
Your Committees find that untreated hearing loss can cause depression and a feeling of isolation that can hinder an individual's ability to attend work or school, resulting in lost income and less participation and engagement in their communities. Your Committees further find that untreated hearing loss is the largest modifiable risk factor for developing dementia. Your Committees also find that hearing aids can significantly improve the quality of life for individuals with hearing impairments by



allowing them to access and comprehend information and their surroundings and improve the communication level with their communities. Your Committees find however, that many individuals with hearing impairments often delay or forgo the purchase of hearing aids because of the significant out-of-pocket costs. This measure establishes minimum insurance coverage requirements through private insurers to promote access to affordable hearing aids.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection and Ways and Means that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 609, S.D. 1, and recommend that it pass Third Reading.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committees on Commerce and
Consumer Protection and Ways
and Means,


DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, Chair


JARRETT KEOHOKALOLE, Chair



