
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL
EFFECTS OF REQUIRING HEALTH INSURERS TO OFFER COVERAGE FOR
HEARING AIDS.

1 WHEREAS, according to the Mayo Clinic, an estimated
2 one-quarter of Americans between the ages of sixty-five and
3 seventy-five and around three-quarters of those older than
4 seventy-five have some degree of hearing loss; and

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6 WHEREAS, further according to the Mayo Clinic, hearing loss
7 is not reversible; and

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9 WHEREAS, according to the American Association of Retired
10 Persons (AARP), the cost of a custom hearing aid can range as
11 high as two thousand dollars and Medicare and most insurance
12 companies do not cover the cost of hearing aids; and

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14 WHEREAS, section 23-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires
15 that "[b]efore any legislative measure that mandates health
16 insurance coverage for specific health services, specific
17 diseases, or certain providers of health care services as part
18 of individual or group health insurance policies, can be
19 considered, there shall be concurrent resolutions passed
20 requesting the auditor to prepare and submit to the legislature
21 a report that assesses both the social and financial effects of
22 the proposed mandated coverage"; and

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24 WHEREAS, section 23-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, further
25 provides that "[t]he concurrent resolutions shall designate a
26 specific legislative bill that:

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28 (1) Has been introduced in the legislature; and
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30 (2) Includes, at a minimum, information identifying the:
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- 1 (A) Specific health service, disease, or provider
- 2 that would be covered;
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- 4 (B) Extent of the coverage;
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- 6 (C) Target groups that would be covered;
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- 8 (D) Limits on utilization, if any; and
- 9
- 10 (E) Standards of care.
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12 For the purposes of this part, mandated health insurance
 13 coverage shall not include mandated options"; and

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 15 WHEREAS, section 23-52, Hawaii Revised Statutes, further
 16 specifies the minimum information required for assessing the
 17 social and financial impact of the proposed health coverage
 18 mandate in the Auditor's report; and

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 20 WHEREAS, H.B. No. 2000 mandates health insurance coverage
 21 for hearing aids for all Medicaid, policies and contracts,
 22 hospital and medical service plan contracts, medical service
 23 corporation contracts, and health maintenance organization
 24 plans; and

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 26 WHEREAS, the Legislature believes that mandatory health
 27 insurance coverage for hearing aids, as provided in H.B.
 28 No. 2000, will substantially assist persons suffering from
 29 hearing loss in leading full lives; now, therefore,

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 31 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
 32 Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
 33 Session of 2008, the Senate concurring, that the Auditor is
 34 requested to conduct an impact assessment report, pursuant to
 35 sections 23-51 and 23-52, Hawaii Revised Statutes, of the social
 36 and financial impacts of mandating coverage for hearing aids for
 37 Medicaid, policies and contracts, hospital and medical service
 38 plan contracts, medical service corporation contracts, and
 39 health maintenance organization plans as provided in H.B. No.
 40 2000; and

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 42 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
 43 identify the number of residents in Hawaii in the target
 44 population who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind based on

1 national prevalence rates, in order to determine who may be
2 impacted by the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants; and
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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
5 include in the impact assessment report a survey of other states
6 in the United States which have implemented a mandate for
7 hearing aids or cochlear implants to examine what the experience
8 has been in these states; and
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10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
11 research public and private entities that provide coverage for
12 hearing aids to determine what is currently being used as a
13 standard for frequency of replacement and what, if any, cost
14 limitations are placed on the hearing aid and cochlear implant
15 coverage benefit. This research should examine whether different
16 standards are applied to adults compared to children in need of
17 these devices. Entities for this research should include, but
18 not limited to, Medicare, Medicaid and health plans in Hawaii,
19 and individuals who need, use or otherwise experience the need
20 for such devices or procedures; and
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22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
23 examine current medically necessary standards of care used to
24 determine what type of hearing aid best suits an individual with
25 hearing loss. An examination of the existing technology in
26 hearing aids and possible future technology should be examined;
27 and
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29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
30 compare the cost and utilization of cochlear implants to hearing
31 aid devices; and
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33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
34 submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislature,
35 including any necessary implementing legislation, no later than
36 twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of
37 2009; and
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39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
40 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Auditor and to the
41 Insurance Commissioner, who in turn is requested to transmit
42 copies to each insurer in the State that issues health insurance
43 policies.
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