

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1146

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 03 2009

RE: S.C.R. No. 168

Honorable Colleen Hanabusa
President of the Senate
Twenty-Fifth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2009
State of Hawaii

Madam:

Your Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection, to which was referred S.C.R. No. 168 entitled:

"SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF REQUIRING HEALTH INSURERS TO OFFER COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to request that the Auditor assess the social and financial effects of requiring health insurers to offer coverage for hearing aids.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Disability and Communication Access Board, Hawaii Centers for Independent Living, Kaiser Permanente, and one private citizen. Written testimony presented to the Committee may be reviewed on the Legislature's website.

Your Committee finds that the ability to use one's hearing to the greatest extent possible is essential to the daily lives of most individuals. Your Committee finds that a hearing aid enhances a person's ability to interact independently in the community but is cost-prohibitive to many individuals. At present, insurance coverage for hearing aids ranges from minimal to nonexistent. The State's second largest insurer does not provide any coverage at all for hearing aids and other insurers cover only a small portion of the actual cost. Your Committee finds that this is especially damaging to children with deafness or hearing loss, who periodically outgrow hearing aids and who

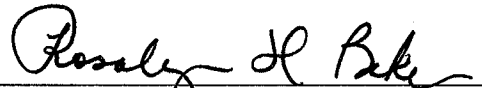


miss vital early educational and linguistic development opportunities when they are not able to use their hearing to the fullest extent possible. Your Committee finds that requiring insurance coverage for hearing aids is essential to allow Hawaii residents with hearing-related disabilities to fully realize the potential of their abilities.

Your Committee notes that while section 23-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires an assessment by the Auditor of the social and financial effects of proposed coverage before insurance coverage of specific diseases or health services may be mandated, the Legislature retains the right to enact laws to protect the general health, safety, and welfare of the State and its residents.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection that is attached to this report, your Committee concurs with the intent and purpose of S.C.R. No. 168 and recommends that it be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Commerce and
Consumer Protection,

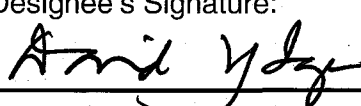


ROSALYN H. BAKER, Chair



The Senate
 Twenty-Fifth Legislature
 State of Hawaii

Record of Votes
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
CPN

Bill / Resolution No.:* SCR 168	Committee Referral: CPN, WAM	Date: 4/2/2009		
<input type="checkbox"/> The committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure. If so, then the previous decision was to: _____				
The Recommendation is: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input type="checkbox"/> Pass, with amendments 2311 <input type="checkbox"/> Hold 2310 <input type="checkbox"/> Recommit 2313				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
BAKER, Rosalyn H. (C)	✓			
IGE, David Y. (VC)	✓			
ESPERO, Will	✓			
GREEN, M.D., Josh				✓
IHARA, Jr., Les	✓			
SAKAMOTO, Norman	✓			
HEMMINGS, Fred				✓
TOTAL	5			2
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution: Original Yellow Pink Goldenrod File with Committee Report Clerk's Office Drafting Agency Committee File Copy				

*Only one measure per Record of Votes