
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL
IMPACTS 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
5

6 WHEREAS, further according to the Mayo Clinic, hearing loss
7 is not reversible; and
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9 WHEREAS, according to the Hawaii Lions Club, the cost of a
10 custom low- to mid-level analog or digital hearing aid begins
11 around \$2,000 or less, and starts around \$3,000 and higher for a
12 high-end hearing aid; and
13

14 WHEREAS, Medicare and most insurance companies do not cover
15 the cost of hearing aids; and
16

17 WHEREAS, section 23-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, requires
18 that "[b]efore any legislative measure that mandates health
19 insurance coverage for specific health services, specific
20 diseases, or certain providers of health care services as part
21 of individual or group health insurance policies, can be
22 considered, there shall be concurrent resolutions passed
23 requesting the auditor to prepare and submit to the legislature
24 a report that assesses both the social and financial effects of
25 the proposed mandated coverage"; and
26

27 WHEREAS, section 23-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, further
28 provides that "[t]he concurrent resolutions shall designate a
29 specific legislative bill that:
30

31 (1) Has been introduced in the legislature; and
32

33 (2) Includes, at a minimum, information identifying the:
34



- 1 (A) Specific health service, disease, or provider
- 2 that would be covered;
- 3
- 4 (B) Extent of the coverage;
- 5
- 6 (C) Target groups that would be covered;
- 7
- 8 (D) Limits on utilization, if any; and
- 9
- 10 (E) Standards of care.

11
 12 For the purposes of this part, mandated health insurance
 13 coverage shall not include mandated optionals"; and
 14

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
 19

20 WHEREAS, legislation introduced in 2011 mandates health
 21 insurance coverage for hearing aids for hospital and medical
 22 service plan contracts, medical service corporation contracts,
 23 and health maintenance organization plans, other than an
 24 accident-only, specified disease, hospital indemnity, Medicare
 25 supplement, long-term care, dental, vision, or other limited
 26 benefit health insurance policy; and
 27

28 WHEREAS, the Legislature believes that mandatory health
 29 insurance coverage for hearing aids will substantially assist
 30 persons suffering from hearing loss to lead full lives; now,
 31 therefore,
 32

33 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
 34 Twenty-sixth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
 35 of 2011, that the Auditor is requested to conduct an impact
 36 assessment report, pursuant to sections 23-51 and 23-52, Hawaii
 37 Revised Statutes, of the social and financial impacts of
 38 mandating coverage for hearing aids for hospital and medical
 39 service plan contracts, medical service corporation contracts,
 40 and health maintenance organization plans; and
 41

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



1 on national prevalence rates, in order to determine who may be
2 impacted by the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants; and
3

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
5 include in the impact assessment report a survey of other states
6 which have implemented a mandate for hearing aids or cochlear
7 implants to examine what the experience has been in these
8 states; and
9

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
16 different standards are applied to adults compared to children
17 in need of these devices. Entities for this research should
18 include, but not be limited to, Medicare, Medicaid, health plans
19 in Hawaii, and individuals who need, use, or otherwise
20 experience the need for such devices or procedures; and
21

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
23 compare the cost and utilization of cochlear implants to hearing
24 aid devices; and
25

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Auditor is requested to
27 submit findings and recommendations to the Legislature,
28 including any necessary implementing legislation, no later than
29 twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of
30 2011; and
31

32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
33 Resolution be transmitted to the Auditor and to the Insurance
34 Commissioner, who in turn is requested to transmit
35 copies to each insurer in the State that issues health insurance
36 policies.
37
38
39

OFFERED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. ...", is written over a horizontal line. Below the line, there is another handwritten signature in black ink, which is more stylized and difficult to decipher.

