

JAN 21 2011

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEARING AIDS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that according to the
2 Mayo Clinic, an estimated one-quarter of Americans between the
3 ages of sixty-five and seventy-five and around three-quarters of
4 those older than seventy-five have some degree of hearing loss.
5 In addition, a study by the Better Hearing Institute, estimated
6 that untreated hearing loss cut household income by an average
7 of nearly \$23,000 per year.

8 According to the Hawaii Lions Club, the cost of a custom
9 low- to mid-level analog or digital hearing aid begins around
10 \$2,000 or less, and around \$3,000 and higher for a high-end
11 hearing aid. Medicare and most private insurance companies do
12 not cover the cost of hearing aids through their base health
13 care coverage. As a result, it is not unusual for people with
14 hearing loss to choose not to purchase hearing aids because
15 these expensive devices are not covered by insurance.

16 The purpose of this Act is to require that the cost of
17 hearing aids be covered by private health insurers.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 431:10A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
3 and to read as follows:

4 "§431:10A- Hearing aids; notice. (a) Any other law to
5 the contrary notwithstanding, each health policy, contract,
6 plan, or agreement issued or renewed in this State after
7 December 31, 2011, other than an accident-only, specified
8 disease, hospital indemnity, medicare supplement, long-term
9 care, dental, vision, or other limited benefit health insurance
10 policy, shall provide, not as an employer option, coverage for
11 the cost of hearing aids for the policyholder and individuals
12 covered under the policy, contract, plan, or agreement.

13 (b) Coverage required under this section may be subject to
14 deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, or annual or maximum
15 payment limits that are consistent with deductibles, copayments,
16 coinsurance, and annual or maximum payment limits applicable to
17 other similar coverage under the policy, contract, plan, or
18 agreement.

19 (c) Every insurer shall provide notice to its
20 policyholders regarding the coverage required by this section.
21 The notice shall be in writing and prominently positioned in any
22 literature or correspondence sent to policyholders and shall be



1 transmitted to policyholders within calendar year 2011 when
2 annual information is made available to policyholders, or in any
3 other mailing to policyholders, but in no case later than
4 December 31, 2011.

5 (d) For the purposes of this section, "hearing aid" shall
6 have the same meaning as defined in section 451A-1."

7 SECTION 3. Chapter 432:1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
9 and to read as follows:

10 "§432:1- Hearing aids; notice. (a) Any other law to
11 the contrary notwithstanding, each individual and group hospital
12 or medical service plan, policy, contract, or agreement issued
13 or renewed in this State after December 31, 2010, shall provide,
14 not as an employer option, coverage for the cost of hearing aids
15 for the member and individuals covered under the individual and
16 group hospital or medical service plan, policy, contract, or
17 agreement.

18 (b) Coverage required under this section may be subject to
19 deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, or annual or maximum
20 payment limits that are consistent with deductibles, copayments,
21 coinsurance, and annual or maximum payment limits applicable to



1 other similar coverage under the individual and group hospital
2 or medical service plan, policy, contract, or agreement.

3 (c) Every mutual benefit society shall provide notice to
4 its members regarding the coverage required by this section.

5 The notice shall be in writing and prominently positioned in any
6 literature or correspondence sent to members and shall be
7 transmitted to members within calendar year 2011 when annual
8 information is made available to policyholders, or in any other
9 mailing to members, but in no case later than December 31, 2011.

10 (d) For the purposes of this section, "hearing aid" shall
11 have the same meaning as defined in section 451A-1."

12 SECTION 4. Section 432D-23, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
13 amended to read as follows:

14 "**§432D-23 Required provisions and benefits.**

15 Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, each
16 policy, contract, plan, or agreement issued in the State after
17 January 1, 1995, by health maintenance organizations pursuant to
18 this chapter, shall include benefits provided in sections
19 431:10-212, 431:10A-115, 431:10A-115.5, 431:10A-116,
20 431:10A-116.5, 431:10A-116.6, 431:10A-119, 431:10A-120,
21 431:10A-121, 431:10A-125, 431:10A-126, [~~and~~] 431:10A-122, and
22 431:10A-_____, and chapter 431M."



1 SECTION 5. The benefit to be provided by health
 2 maintenance organizations corresponding to the benefit provided
 3 under section 431:10A- , Hawaii Revised Statutes, as contained
 4 in the amendment to section 432D-23, Hawaii Revised Statutes, in
 5 section 4 of this Act, shall take effect for all policies,
 6 contracts, plans, or agreements issued in the State after
 7 December 31, 2011.

8 SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
 9 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

11

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Report Title:

Health Insurance Coverage; Hearing Aids

Description:

Requires health insurance policies and contracts to provide coverage for the cost of hearing aids in their base plans.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

