

SB 309

Measure Title: RELATING TO HEARING AIDS.
Report Title: Health Insurance Coverage; Hearing Aids
Description: Requires health insurance policies and contracts issued after 12/31/13 to provide coverage for the cost of hearing aids in their base plans.
Companion:
Package: Deaf and Blind
Current Referral: HMS/CPN, WAM
Introducer(s): CHUN OAKLAND, Ihara



NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

SHAN S. TSUTSUI
LT. GOVERNOR

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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KEALI'I S. LOPEZ
DIRECTOR

JO ANN M. UCHIDA TAKEUCHI
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HUMAN SERVICES AND
COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE
Regular Session of 2013

Thursday, January 31, 2013
10:15 a.m.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL NO. 309 – RELATING TO HEARING AIDS.

TO THE HONORABLE JOSH GREEN AND ROSALYN BAKER, CHAIRS, AND MEMBERS
OF THE COMMITTEE:

My name is Gordon Ito, State Insurance Commissioner (“Commissioner”),
testifying on behalf of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
(“Department”). The Department takes **no position** on this bill and **offers the following**
comments.

The purpose of this bill is to add a new mandated health insurance benefit
requiring health insurers to provide coverage for hearing aids.

The addition of a new mandated coverage may trigger section 1311(d)(3) of
federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which requires states to defray the
additional cost of any benefits in excess of the essential health benefits of the state’s
qualified health plan.

Any proposed mandated health insurance coverage requires the passage of a
concurrent resolution requesting the State Legislative Auditor to prepare and submit a
report assessing the social and financial impacts of the proposed mandate, pursuant to
Hawaii Revised Statutes § 23-51.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on this matter.

HMSA



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

January 31, 2013

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
The Honorable Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senate Committees on Human Services and Commerce and Consumer Protection

Re: SB 309 – Relating to Hearing Aids

Dear Chair Chun Oakland, Chair Baker, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify on SB 309 which would mandate that health plans provide coverage for the cost of hearing aids. HMSA **supports the intent** of this legislation. However, **this legislation may be unnecessary because we already provide coverage for hearing aids.**

HMSA's plans do provide coverage for hearing aids under both our Preferred Provider Plan and Health Plan Hawaii Plus (our HMO plan). As such, the coverage was included in the plan selected by the State as the Hawaii Health Connector's Benchmark Plan, as required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

A concern the Committee should be aware of is the potential impact of another provision of the ACA which requires the State to cover the cost of any State mandate implemented after December 31, 2011. While coverage for hearing aids is in the Benchmark Plan, we are uncertain as to the implications of the State mandating these services at this time. Will this State action require the State to pay for the hearing aid benefit?

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our comments on this Bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark K. Oto'.

Mark K. Oto
Director
Government Relations

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SERVICES**

AND

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND
CONSUMER PROTECTION**

January 31, 2013

Senate Bill 309 Relating to Hearing Aids

Chair Chun Oakland, Chair Baker, members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection, I am Rick Tsujimura, representing State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company (State Farm).

State Farm **opposes** Senate Bill 309 Relating to Hearing Aids unless a cap is inserted to limit coverage for hearing aids to a maximum of \$2,500 per person for each hearing impaired ear for a 36 month period.

State Farm would not oppose the bill if it applied only to new policies and not policy renewals.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Twenty-Seventh Legislature
Regular Session of 2013

THE SENATE

Committee on Human Services

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Senator Josh Green, M.D., Vice Chair

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair

Senator Brickwood Galuteria, Vice Chair

State Capitol, Conference Room 229
Thursday, January 31, 2013; 10:15 a.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON S.B. 309
RELATING TO HEARING AIDS**

The ILWU Local 142 **supports** S.B. 309, which requires health insurance policies and contracts issued after 12/31/13 to provide coverage for the cost of hearing aids in their base plans.

Everyone has experience with family members, co-workers, friends, and others who are hard of hearing. Most of them would benefit from hearing aids, but many of them cannot afford the cost since health insurance does not provide coverage for hearing aids.

S.B. 309 will provide a huge benefit for so many, but there is, of course, concern about the impact on health plan costs. Any mandated benefit has the potential of increasing premiums. The Legislature will need to weigh the benefits of hearing aids for those who need them versus potentially increased premiums for all.

The ILWU urges consideration of S.B. 309. Thank you for allowing us to share our views and concerns.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: lauraterp@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB309 on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM
Date: Tuesday, January 29, 2013 3:09:54 PM

SB309

Submitted on: 1/29/2013

Testimony for HMS/CPN on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
laura Safranski	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support this bill

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: sabinawilford@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB309 on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM
Date: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 2:55:46 PM

SB309

Submitted on: 1/30/2013

Testimony for HMS/CPN on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sabina Wilford	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I am in support of this bill.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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To: [HMS Testimony](#)
Cc: chevy59@sprint.blackberry.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB309 on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM
Date: Monday, January 28, 2013 1:42:55 PM

SB309

Submitted on: 1/28/2013

Testimony for HMS/CPN on Jan 31, 2013 10:15AM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ed Chevy	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments: My name is Ed Chevy. i wear a hearing aid to keep coping with the hearing world. My son wears a hearing aid, too and so is his mother. Hearing aids are expensive and are not covered by most health insurance plans. Depending on income level, we couldn't get financial assistance to help purchasing hearing aids. Hearing aids are needed to be replace every 5 years to keep from being inconvenient, unreliable and unattractive when technology gets better for us to hear better. Thank you

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