
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW AND
REPORT ON THE COMPLEXITIES OF HEARING AID COSTS AND
COVERAGES BY HEALTH INSURANCE.

1 WHEREAS, by Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 34, S.D. 1,
2 Regular Session of 2014, the Legislature requested the Auditor
3 to assess the social and financial impacts of requiring health
4 insurers to offer coverage for hearing aids, as proposed in
5 Senate Bill No. 309, S.D. 1, Regular Session of 2014 (S.B. 309),
6 pursuant to sections 23-51 and 23-52, Hawaii Revised Statutes;
7 and

8
9 WHEREAS, in response, the Auditor published Report No.
10 14-10, entitled a "Study of Proposed Mandatory Health Insurance
11 for Hearing Aids", dated October 2014; and

12
13 WHEREAS, the Auditor found that insurers already provide
14 coverage or planned to start providing coverage in 2015, and
15 that S.B. 309 was likely to have minimal effect on insurance
16 premium costs; and

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18 WHEREAS, the Auditor also found that hearing loss affects
19 an estimated one-third of people in the United States between
20 the ages of sixty-five and seventy-five, and close to one half
21 of people older than seventy-five; and

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23 WHEREAS, this body understands that individuals over the
24 age of sixty-five are eligible for insurance coverage by
25 Medicare and that the State is preempted from mandating benefits
26 to Medicare because regulatory authority rests with the Centers
27 for Medicare and Medicaid; and

28
29 WHEREAS, Report No. 14-10 found that as of August 2014, the
30 twenty states with laws requiring that private health insurers
31 provide coverage for hearing aids each had at least one coverage



1 limitation based on the age of the beneficiary, the frequency at
2 which insurers must provide hearing aids to beneficiaries, or
3 the dollar cost the insurer must cover; and
4

5 WHEREAS, Report No. 14-10 found the proposed bill's lack of
6 coverage parameters problematic; and
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8 WHEREAS, the Report notes that the Department of Health had
9 proposed changes to ensure adequate coverage so that those
10 needing hearing aids are not left with a large co-payment and
11 extra costs that would cause financial hardship; and
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13 WHEREAS, this body finds that additional details are needed
14 on commercial and individual insurance coverage offered for
15 hearing aids by each insurance plan, including the types of
16 hearing aids covered and the coverage level itself; and
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18 WHEREAS, this body further finds that additional details
19 are also needed on the medical necessity, accessibility, and
20 cost of hearing aid options, with input from audiologists and
21 hearing aid dealers and fitters who engage in the practice of
22 fitting and selling hearing aids in the State; now, therefore,
23

24 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
25 Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of
26 2020, that a working group be established to review and report
27 on the complexities of hearing aid costs and coverages by health
28 insurance, including but not limited to:
29

- 30 (1) The categories of hearing aids covered by each health
31 plan in the State;
32
- 33 (2) The level of coverage offered by each health plan in
34 the State, including obligations the patient must
35 cover such as co-pays, deductibles, and annual fees;
36
- 37 (3) The medical necessity, accessibility, and costs of
38 different types of hearing aids;
39
- 40 (4) Recommended coverage parameters, including an
41 evaluation of the following factors: age of the



1 beneficiary, frequency at which insurers must provide
2 hearing aids to beneficiaries, and the minimum dollar
3 cost or percentage of cost the insurer must cover, and
4 whether any of these or other factors should be
5 incorporated into provider requirements;
6

7 (5) Whether an appeal procedure should be implemented to
8 allow for replacements prior to the expiration of a
9 minimum period, if any, for obtaining new hearing aids
10 within the coverage plan, if hearing loss worsens; and
11

12 (6) Other matters recommended by the working group; and
13

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group shall consist
15 of the following members:
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17 (1) One member of the House of Representatives to be
18 designated by the Speaker of the House of
19 Representatives, who shall co-chair the working group;
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21 (2) One member of the Senate to be designated by the
22 Senate President, who shall co-chair the working
23 group;
24

25 (3) The Insurance Commissioner, or the Insurance
26 Commissioner's designee;
27

28 (4) The Administrator of the Med-QUEST Division of the
29 Department of Human Services, or the Administrator's
30 designee; and
31

32 (5) One representative of the Department of the Attorney
33 General to be designated by the Attorney General; and
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35 The co-chairs of the working group shall invite the
36 following individuals to participate as members of the working
37 group:
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39 (1) One representative from each entity operating a health
40 plan in the State;
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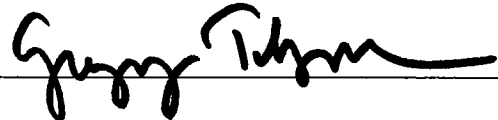
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- 1 (2) An audiologist licensed under chapter 468E, Hawaii
- 2 Revised Statutes;
- 3
- 4 (3) One hearing aid dealer or fitter licensed under
- 5 chapter 451A; and
- 6
- 7 (4) Any other individuals the co-chairs recommend; and
- 8

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group, with the
 10 assistance of the Legislative Reference Bureau, shall submit a
 11 report of its findings and recommendations, including any
 12 proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty
 13 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2021; and
 14

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group shall
 16 dissolve on January 30, 2021; and
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18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 19 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, President of the
 20 Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Insurance
 21 Commissioner of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs,
 22 Administrator of the Med-QUEST Division of the Department of
 23 Human Services, Attorney General, and Director of the
 24 Legislative Reference Bureau.
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OFFERED BY: 

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