

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2803

Honolulu, Hawaii

**MAR 03 2022**

RE: S.B. No. 2439  
S.D. 2

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-First State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2022  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection, to which was referred S.B. No. 2439, S.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HEARING AIDS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require health insurance policies and contracts issued after December 31, 2022, to provide coverage for purchases of medically necessary hearing aid models, including analog, digital, and digitally programmable, with standard features, per hearing impaired ear, every thirty-six months.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Disability and Communication Access Board, AARP Hawai'i and nine individuals. Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from the Hawai'i Medical Service Association and Hawai'i Association of Health Plans. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Department of Human Services, Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i, and one individual.

Your Committee finds that many health insurance companies have inconsistent coverage for hearing aids and that federal Medicare coverage is very limited, causing enrollees to often face large out-of-pocket costs. As a result, it is not unusual for people with hearing loss to choose to delay or forgo purchasing



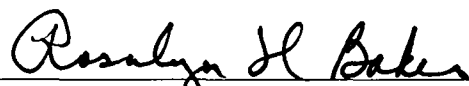
hearing aids because they are cost prohibitive. This can further result in residents not being able to attend work or school, resulting in lost income, and less participation and engagement in their communities. Your Committee additionally finds that the Auditor has already conducted an assessment of the impact of mandates for hearing aid insurance coverage and that amendments to this measure are necessary to specify minimum dollar amounts to conform to the Auditor's report.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Clarifying that the hearing aid coverage required by this measure shall be subject to a minimum benefit of \$1,500 per hearing-impaired ear every thirty-six months;
- (2) Clarifying that any literature or correspondence an insurer sends to insureds, including annual information that is made available to insureds, shall include information concerning the coverage required by this measure, provided that the information concerning the coverage shall also be posted on the insurer's website;
- (3) Inserting an effective date of January 1, 2023; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

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 is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2439, S.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Third Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2439, S.D. 2.

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

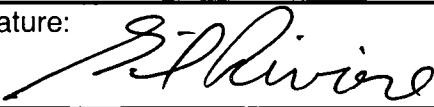


ROSALYN H. BAKER, Chair



The Senate  
Thirty-First Legislature  
State of Hawai'i

**Record of Votes**  
**Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection**  
**CPN**

Bill / Resolution No.:*	Committee Referral:	Date:		
SB 2439, SD 1	HTH, CPN	02-22-2022		
<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 type="checkbox"/> Pass, unamended 2312 <input checked="" 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)	X			
CHANG, Stanley (VC)	X			
DECOITE, Lynn	X			
NISHIHARA, Clarence K.	X			
RIVIERE, Gil	X			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A.	X			
FEVELLA, Kurt	X			
<b>TOTAL</b>	7	0	0	0
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
<b>Distribution:</b> Original                          Yellow                          Pink                          Goldenrod File with Committee Report      Clerk's Office              Drafting Agency            Committee File Copy				

\*Only one measure per Record of Votes