



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

March 2, 2023

The Honorable Sharon Chung
Illinois House
Illinois House District 91
401 S. Spring St.
Springfield, IL 62706-4000

RE: Hearing Aid Coverage; HB 2443

Dear Representative Chung:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to express support for HB 2443, which requires that an individual or group policy for accident and health insurance or managed care plan must provide coverage for medically necessary hearing instruments and related services for all individuals when a hearing professional prescribes a hearing instrument to augment communication.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 9,500 ASHA members reside in Illinois.¹

ASHA supports HB 2443, which also specifies that hearing aid purchases are subject to a minimum benefit of one hearing instrument to be covered for each ear every 36 months.

HB 2443 provides critical support for reducing instances of untreated hearing loss. Studies have linked untreated hearing loss to many social and economic factors, including depression, withdrawal from social situations, reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety, impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks, reduced job performance and earning potential, and diminished psychological and overall health.² Approximately 15% of school-age children have some degree of hearing loss in one or both ears, with 5.4% (or about 1 in 20) having less severe or unilateral hearing loss.³ Academic achievement and social functioning are significantly impacted by even a mild to moderate hearing loss, which may bring about difficulty in learning and building important interpersonal skills necessary to healthy self-esteem. In fact, over one-third of children with less severe or unilateral hearing loss are projected to fail at least one grade or will require additional educational support, which is estimated to cost the educational system over \$5.5 billion.⁴

Thank you for helping to ensure that the citizens of Illinois have access to hearing aids, which will help them participate in daily living activities and improve their ability to engage in social interaction. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Doanne Ward-Williams, ASHA's director, state affairs, at dwardwilliams@asha.org.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Augustine, PhD, CCC-SLP
2023 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *Illinois* [Quick Facts].

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/illinois-state-flyer.pdf>

² Emmett, S. D., & Francis, H. W. (2015). The Socioeconomic Impact of Hearing Loss in U.S. Adults. *36*(3), 545–550. doi: [10.1097/MAO.0000000000000562](https://doi.org/10.1097/MAO.0000000000000562).

³ Niskar, A.S., Kieszak, S.M., Holmes, A., Esteban, E, Rubin, C., & Brody, D.J. (1998). *Prevalence of Hearing Loss Among Children 6 to 19 Years of Age: The Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey*. *JAMA*, *279*(14), 1071–1075. doi:10.1001/jama.279.14.1071.

⁴ Tharpe, A. M. (2008). *Unilateral and mild bilateral hearing loss in children: past and current perspectives*. *Trends in Amplification*, *12*(1), 7–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1084713807304668>.