

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 15 2011

RE: S.B. No. 894
S.D. 1

Honorable Shan S. Tsutsui
President of the Senate
Twenty-Sixth State Legislature
Regular Session of 2011
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committees on Human Services and Commerce and Consumer Protection, to which was referred S.B. No. 894 entitled:

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

beg leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to require that the cost of hearing aids be covered by private health insurers.

Your Committees received testimony in support of this measure from the Disability and Communication Access Board, Assistive Technology Resource Centers of Hawaii, and ten individuals. Your Committees received testimony in opposition to this measure from Hawaii Association of Health Plans. Your Committees received comments on this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Hawaii Medical Service Association, and Kaiser Permanente.

Your Committees find that hearing aids can cost more than \$2,000, which is an expense beyond the reach of many households. Your Committees further find that private health insurance plans provide partial coverage for eyeglasses to correct vision. Some health insurance plans provide partial coverage for hearing aids. However, Medicare and most private insurance companies do not cover the cost of hearing aids through their base health care coverage. As a result, it is not unusual for people with hearing loss to choose not to purchase hearing aids because these expensive devices are not covered by insurance.



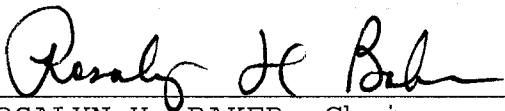
Your Committees also find that hearing is an equally important sense upon which an individual depends for communication, so an individual with hearing loss should have some coverage for hearing aids through a private insurance carrier.

Your Committees have heard the concerns regarding mandating health plans to expand benefits and the need for a study related to the social and financial effects of requiring health insurers to offer coverage for hearing aids. Your Committees believe that these concerns merit further discussion by the Committee on Ways and Means.

Your Committees have amended this measure by making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committees on Human Services and Commerce and Consumer Protection that are attached to this report, your Committees are in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 894, as amended herein, and recommend that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 894, S.D. 1, and be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committees on Human Services
and Commerce and Consumer
Protection,



ROSALYN H. BAKER, Chair



SUZANNE CHUN OAKLAND, Chair



The Senate
 Twenty-Sixth Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Human Services
HMS

Bill / Resolution No.:* SB 994	Committee Referral: Hms/CLM, WAM	Date: 2-8-11
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The committee is reconsidering its previous decision on this measure.
 If so, then the previous decision was to: _____

The Recommendation is:

Pass, unamended 2312
 Pass, with amendments 2311
 Hold 2310
 Recommit 2313

Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
CHUN OAKLAND, Suzanne (C)	✓			
IHARA, Jr., Les (VC)	✓			
GREEN, M.D., Josh	✓			
SLOM, Sam				✓
TOTAL	3	0	0	1

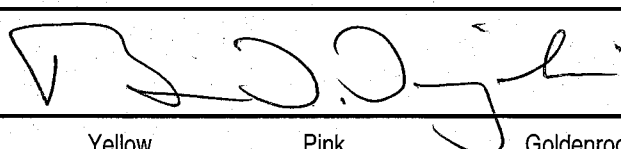
Recommendation:
 Adopted
 Not Adopted

Chair's or Designee's Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

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The Senate
 Twenty-Sixth Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
CPN

Bill / Resolution No.:* SB 894	Committee Referral: HMS/CPN, WAM	Date: 2/8/2011		
<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)	✓			
TANIGUCHI, Brian T. (VC)	✓			
GALUTERIA, Brickwood	✓			
GREEN, M.D., Josh	✓			
NISHIHARA, Clarence K.	✓			
SOLOMON, Malama				✓
SLOM, Sam				✓
TOTAL	5	0	0	2
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution: Original Yellow Pink Goldenrod File with Committee Report Clerk's Office Drafting Agency Committee File Copy				

*Only one measure per Record of Votes