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

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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

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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



1 WHEREAS, Report No. 14-10 found that as of August 2014, the
2 twenty states with laws requiring that private health insurers
3 provide coverage for hearing aids each had at least one coverage
4 limitation based on the age of the beneficiary, the frequency at
5 which insurers must provide hearing aids to beneficiaries, or
6 the dollar cost the insurer must cover; and

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8 WHEREAS, Report No. 14-10 found the proposed bill's lack of
9 coverage parameters problematic; and

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11 WHEREAS, the Report notes that the Department of Health had
12 proposed changes to ensure adequate coverage so that those
13 needing hearing aids are not left with a large co-payment and
14 extra costs that would cause financial hardship; and

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16 WHEREAS, this body finds that additional details are needed
17 on commercial and individual insurance coverage offered for
18 hearing aids by each insurance plan, including the types of
19 hearing aids covered and the coverage level itself; and

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21 WHEREAS, this body further finds that additional details
22 are also needed on the medical necessity, accessibility, and
23 cost of hearing aid options, with input from audiologists and
24 hearing aid dealers and fitters who engage in the practice of
25 fitting and selling hearing aids in the State; now, therefore,

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

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



- 1 (4) Recommended coverage parameters, including an
2 evaluation of the following factors: age of the
3 beneficiary, frequency at which insurers must provide
4 hearing aids to beneficiaries, and the minimum dollar
5 cost or percentage of cost the insurer must cover, and
6 whether any of these or other factors should be
7 incorporated into provider requirements;
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- 9 (5) Whether an appeal procedure should be implemented to
10 allow for replacements prior to the expiration of a
11 minimum period, if any, for obtaining new hearing aids
12 within the coverage plan, if hearing loss worsens; and
13
- 14 (6) Other matters recommended by the working group; and
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group shall consist
17 of the following members:

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- 19 (1) One member of the House of Representatives to be
20 designated by the Speaker of the House of
21 Representatives, who shall co-chair the working group;
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- 23 (2) One member of the Senate to be designated by the
24 Senate President, who shall co-chair the working
25 group;
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- 27 (3) The Insurance Commissioner, or the Insurance
28 Commissioner's designee;
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- 30 (4) The Administrator of the Med-QUEST Division of the
31 Department of Human Services, or the Administrator's
32 designee; and
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- 34 (5) One representative of the Department of the Attorney
35 General to be designated by the Attorney General; and
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37 The co-chairs of the working group shall invite the
38 following individuals to participate as members of the working
39 group:

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- 41 (1) One representative from each entity operating a health
42 plan in the State;



- 1 (2) An audiologist licensed under chapter 468E, Hawaii
- 2 Revised Statutes;
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- 4 (3) One hearing aid dealer or fitter licensed under
- 5 chapter 451A; and
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- 7 (4) Any other individuals the co-chairs recommend; and
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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
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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 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, President
 20 of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives,
 21 Insurance Commissioner of the Department of Commerce and
 22 Consumer Affairs, Administrator of the Med-QUEST Division of the
 23 Department of Human Services, Attorney General, and Director of
 24 the Legislative Reference Bureau.
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OFFERED BY: *Guy Robinson*
 FEB 07 2020