



Media Contact:
Kelsey Cruz
4600 Valley Road Suite 420
Lincoln, NE 68510-4844
(402) 471-3593
Kelsey.Cruz@nebraska.gov

For Immediate Release:

January 25, 2019

NCDHH SUPPORTS BILL REQUIRING INSURERS TO COVER HEARING AIDS FOR CHILDREN

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) strongly supports Legislative Bill (LB 15), the Children of Nebraska Hearing Aid Act, introduced in the Nebraska Legislature by Senator Carol Blood. The bill would require insurers to provide hearing aid coverage for children in Nebraska and is a top priority for the Commission this year. Coverage includes providing hearing aids, hearing evaluations from a licensed audiologist, costs related to dispensing, fitting and programming, repairs, ear mold impressions, and follow-up adjustments.

Hearing aids can cost up to \$6,000 per pair and must be replaced every 3-5 years, which is a heavy financial burden on some Nebraska families who need to purchase hearing aids for their children. Children can fall behind in academics as well as literacy and language development when there is no access to clear sound, because they do not have hearing aids.

This bill directly parallels the mission of NCDHH: to provide advocacy, equality and communication access to all Nebraskans. Board Chair, Jeremy Fitzpatrick, says the outcome of this bill will be a win-win for everyone. "People are often surprised when I tell them hearing aids for children are not covered by most insurance companies in Nebraska," he said. "Senator Blood's bill will help Nebraska parents who need hearing aids for their children, while simultaneously saving tax dollars for social services needed for children who are not given early access to hearing aids in life."

The fiscal impact of this bill will save schools and taxpayers an additional \$420,000 in funds, with an overall lifetime cost of \$1,000,000 in special education, lost wages and health complications.

“The passing of this bill would be an investment in the future leaders of Nebraska by breaking down educational and employment barriers,” Executive Director John Wyvill said. “We would like to give a special thanks to Senator Blood and co-sponsor Senator Hilkemann for introducing this legislation on behalf of Nebraska children and families.”

Currently, 22 states have hearing aid legislation and 16 have legislation in process. To learn more about the national move for better hearing aid coverage please visit <http://www.letamericahear.org/facts/>

#