

Halverson, Vicky

From: Alicia Boehme [aliciab@drwi.org]
Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2009 9:03 PM
To: Kerkman, Samantha
Subject: [Possible Spam] Hearing Aid/Cochlear Implant Potential Amendment - Position Statement from Disability Rights Wisconsin
Importance: Low



April 22, 2009

To: Members, Wisconsin State Assembly
From: Lynn Breedlove, Executive Director
Alicia Boehme, Advocacy Specialist

Disability Rights Wisconsin is a private non profit organization designated to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Wisconsin.

Disability Rights Wisconsin is in favor of Assembly Bill 16/ Senate Bill 27, the bill that would require that insurance companies cover hearing aids and cochlear implants for children under the age of 18 years old.

We are aware that a bill will be up in both the Senate and the Assembly tomorrow Thursday April 23, 2009 and **strongly encourage you to vote in favor of the bill in the form it was passed out of committee.**

We have heard that there may be an amendment introduced on the Assembly floor tomorrow, that would allow insurance companies to require a family to pay back the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants if the family held the insurance plan for less than one year. **We oppose this amendment and ask you to vote against the amendment if it comes to the floor.**

We believe that this is not an appropriate amendment because there is no other situation where a person would be required to pay back the cost of treatment because they choose to drop their insurance plan or leave their place of employment. We believe it would create a dangerous precedent and it allows insurance companies to impose separate and punitive rules based on the diagnosis

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of hearing loss.

Second, it restricts families from advancing in their work and life. If a family member were offered a job that paid more or advanced their career, they would be forced to decide to pay back substantial sum of money to the insurance company, or forgo the opportunity to advance.

The underlying concern behind this amendment is that families will choose to get insurance only to pay for hearing aids or cochlear implants and then once received will drop coverage causing a hardship for insurance companies. First, there is absolutely no evidence that this would occur; it is merely speculation. Second, the incentive for families is to keep insurance, not drop it. If a child receives a hearing aid and in particular a cochlear implant, there are follow-up appointments and adjustments that would keep families from wanting to discontinue treatment. Therefore, families are much more likely to keep coverage.

Thank you for your consideration.