
SENATE BILL 6394

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Senators Rolfes, Roach, Miloscia, Liias, Conway, Chase, McCoy, Hasegawa, Fraser, Frockt, and Habib

Read first time 01/19/16. Referred to Committee on Health Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to parity in coverage for hearing disabilities;
2 adding a new section to chapter 48.43 RCW; adding a new section to
3 chapter 41.05 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 74.09 RCW; and
4 creating new sections.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that coverage for
7 hearing disabilities is commonly excluded from insurance coverage.
8 This creates a disincentive for the hearing-impaired to seek
9 treatment given that costs would be borne entirely out-of-pocket and
10 be paid in addition to rising deductibles for health insurance
11 coverage already required by the patient protection and affordable
12 care act, P.L. 111-148 (2010) and as amended by the health care and
13 education reconciliation act, P.L. 111-152 (2010).

14 The legislature recognizes that, according to the national
15 institute on deafness and other communication disorders, fewer than
16 one-fifth of Americans between the ages of twenty and sixty-nine who
17 could benefit from using hearing aids have ever used them. The
18 legislature further finds that twenty states have addressed the cost
19 barrier issue by requiring coverage for hearing disabilities.
20 Therefore, the legislature intends to require that insurance coverage
21 be at parity for hearing disability services, which means this

1 coverage, subject to reasonable caps on costs for hearing
2 instruments, shall be delivered under the same terms and conditions
3 as other medical and surgical services.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This act shall be known as the hearing
5 disability parity act.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 48.43
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) Each group contract for comprehensive health care services
9 which is entered into, or renewed on or after January 1, 2017, shall
10 include coverage for hearing aids for children under the age of
11 eighteen when medically necessary. Coverage must include a new
12 hearing aid every five years, a new hearing aid when alterations to
13 the existing hearing aid cannot meet the needs of the child, and
14 services and supplies such as the initial assessment, fitting,
15 adjustment, and auditory training.

16 (2) Each group contract for comprehensive health care services
17 which is entered into, or renewed on or after January 1, 2017, shall
18 offer optional coverage for hearing aids for adults. If the employer
19 chooses to add this option, the health plan must provide hearing aid
20 coverage of no less than one thousand four hundred dollars per ear
21 every three years for adults.

22 (3) For purposes of this section, "hearing aid" or "hearing
23 instrument" has the same meaning as in RCW 18.35.010(12).

24 (4) The hearing aid must be prescribed by a licensed audiologist
25 and dispensed by a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument
26 specialist.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 41.05
28 RCW to read as follows:

29 (1) A health plan offered to employees and their covered
30 dependents under this chapter issued or renewed on or after January
31 1, 2017, shall include coverage for hearing aids for children under
32 the age of eighteen when medically necessary. Coverage must include a
33 new hearing aid every five years, a new hearing aid when alterations
34 to the existing hearing aid cannot meet the needs of the child, and
35 services and supplies such as the initial assessment, fitting,
36 adjustment, and auditory training.

1 (2) For purposes of this section, "hearing aid" or "hearing
2 instrument" has the same meaning as in RCW 18.35.010(12).

3 (3) The hearing aid must be prescribed by a licensed audiologist
4 and dispensed by a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument
5 specialist.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 74.09
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The medical assistance coverage offered to children under
9 this chapter issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2017, shall
10 include coverage for hearing aids for children under the age of
11 twenty when medically necessary. Coverage must include a new hearing
12 aid every five years, a new hearing aid when alterations to the
13 existing hearing aid cannot meet the needs of the child, and services
14 and supplies such as the initial assessment, fitting, adjustment, and
15 auditory training.

16 (2) For purposes of this section, "hearing aid" or "hearing
17 instrument" has the same meaning as in RCW 18.35.010(12).

18 (3) The hearing aid must be prescribed by a licensed audiologist
19 and dispensed by a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument
20 specialist.

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