**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**If you are signing on as an organization, please use your organization's letterhead. For professionals serving DHH kids, please include your name and title at the bottom for identification purposes.**

**Please customize this letter and submit it online through the** [**Legislative Portal**](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/) **to register your support before the deadline to be considered in the Assembly Appropriations Committee Hearing.**

**Please send a copy to** **michelle.m.marciniak@gmail.com**

[Date]

The Honorable Chris Holden

Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee

1021 O St., Suite 8820

Sacramento CA 95814

**RE: SB 635 – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Holden,

[Name of organization] is pleased to support SB 635 (Menjivar and Portantino), the Let California Kids Hear Act, which would require health insurance plans to cover hearing aids and services for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

[INSERT A FEW SENTENCES ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION, the geographic region of the children you serve, AND WHY YOU SUPPORT CHILDREN HAVING COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS AND SERVICES].

Children who need hearing aids are vulnerable, and lack of early treatment and interventions has negative and permanent consequences. Experts note that pediatric hearing loss is considered a developmental emergency requiring timely intervention to prevent permanent delays and consequences that are not only devastating for children and families but also costly to society.

The CDC estimated that the cost to taxpayers is more than $1 million dollars PER child who doesn’t receive early intervention for special education, other medical complications, and unemployment.

In 1998, California created the Newborn Hearing Screening Program, acknowledging the urgent need to screen, diagnose and provide early intervention for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Yet today, access to hearing aids for children remains unaffordable, with less than 9% of health plans covering children’s hearing aids in California. More than 30 states mandate hearing aid coverage for children in commercial plans and/or the essential health benefit state exchange. California is not one of them.

In 2019, the legislature passed the AB 598 (Bloom) Let California Kids Hear Act, and instead of signing it, the Administration offered an alternative solution to address this pediatric health equity issue. However, after two years and a $32.8 M budget (one-third of that for administration), only 225 of the estimated 7,000 children who need assistance with hearing aids have benefited from HACCP. California is not alone in these challenges; Georgia tried a similar program and failed, ultimately passing a mandate in 2018. Given the fundamental challenges with the program and significantly greater cost, the best solution to support the timely treatment of pediatric hearing loss is through an insurance requirement.

SB 635 will allow families to use their commercial health plans to support access to local providers within their medical homes, reducing delays in accessing time-sensitive care and improving outcomes for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

For these reasons, we urge you to **SUPPORT SB 635,** to Let California Kids Hear.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title

Organization]

The Honorable Chris Holden

The Honorable Megan Dahle

The Honorable Issac Bryan

The Honorable Wendy Carrillo

The Honorable Diane Dixon

The Honorable Mike Fong

The Honorable Gregg Hart

The Honorable Josh Lowenthal

The Honorable Devon Mathis

The Honorable Diane Papen

The Honorable Gail Pellerin

The Honorable Esmeralda Soria

The Honorable Phil Ting

The Honorable Robert Rivas