



In a victory for deep-pocketed special interests and a devastating blow to thousands of vulnerable children in California, Governor Newsom announced he has vetoed SB 635 (Menjivar – Portantino), the Let California Kids Hear Act.

The bill would have required private health plans in California to cover hearing aids for children, providing deaf and hard-of-hearing kids with foundational access to sound to connect with their world. SB 635 would also have saved California taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

“We are heartbroken and angered by Governor Newsom’s decision,” said Let California Kids Hear co-founder Michelle Marciniak. “Tens of thousands of children were counting on the Governor to act on their behalf. Instead, he is allowing a developmental emergency 25 years in the making to continue on his watch. The Governor is fond of saying all children deserve the opportunity to thrive. What about our children?”

SB 635 was co-authored by Sen. Caroline Menjivar and Sen. Anthony Portantino. The bill passed every legislative committee and the Assembly and Senate without a single no vote.

“On behalf of thousands of families, as well as doctors, medical experts, advocacy organizations and countless supporters, we thank Senator Menjivar and Senator Portantino for their leadership on this issue, as well as the entire Legislature for their support,” Marciniak continued. “They are true champions for our children.”

Gov. Newsom’s veto statement indicates that the state will devote additional resources to the Hearing Aid Coverage for Children Program (HACCP), launched in 2021, saying that the Governor is “...committed to ensuring that hearing impaired [sic] children can have access to the services and supports they need, including hearing aids.” The HACPP has wasted hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars while serving only a tiny fraction of eligible children.

“The mere use of the phrase “hearing impaired” – highly offensive to those in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community – is indicative of how out-of-touch the Newsom Administration is on this issue,” Marciniak said. “By doubling down on the HACPP, the Governor is failing some of the most vulnerable children in the state and overburdening taxpayers.”

Private health plans in California, some of Governor Newsom's largest donors, previously opposed similar legislation. More than 30 U.S. states already mandate coverage for hearing aids.

"Let me be clear: we will keep fighting for these children," Marciniak said. "This is California. We must – and we will – find a solution so *every* child in California has the opportunity to thrive."