



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, CALIFORNIA

February 20, 2019

The Honorable Richard Bloom  
State Capitol, P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0050  
Fax: (916) 319-2150

**RE: AB 598 (Bloom): Hearing aids: minors AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Bloom:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, strongly supports your proposed legislation AB 598 (Bloom). This bill would require that health care service plans and insurance policies include coverage for hearing aids for minors, to the extent permitted by federal law.

California has established an Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program that aims to identify infants with permanent hearing loss by 3 months of age and provide follow-up treatment. This program is essential to swift detection and management of hearing loss in children. Early intervention improves speech and language development and school and occupational outcomes in deaf and hard-of-hearing children. These improvements result in lower educational and vocational costs and increased lifetime productivity. However, one common obstacle to adequate treatment is that insurance plans do not always adequately cover hearing aids for children, leaving families of limited means unable to access the care they know their child needs.

AB 598 (Bloom) would remedy this situation by requiring all health care insurance policies and service plans to include coverage for hearing aids for those under 18 years of age, to the extent permitted by federal law. This requirement would align with current coverage standards that exist through California Children's Services, and would help ensure that all California children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing are able to access sound for development of spoken language, access education, socialize with friends and family members, and go about daily tasks without the impediments associated with untreated permanent hearing loss, which would in turn contribute to a marked improvement in their health and well-being.

Pediatricians strongly support AB 598 (Bloom). We thank you for your public service and for your leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dylan Chan".

Dylan Chan  
Dylan K. Chan, MD, PhD  
AAP EHDI Regional Network Liaison - CA  
Assistant Professor, Pediatric Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery  
Director, Children's Communication Center, University of California, San Francisco

CC: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne