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HOUSE BILL 1336

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State of Washington

59th Legislature

2005 Regular Session

**By** Representatives Flannigan, Morrell, O'Brien, Campbell, Kirby, Hudgins, Darneille, Lantz, Hunt, Appleton, Moeller, Kenney, Kagi, Dickerson, McDermott, Santos, Chase and Ormsby

Read first time 01/20/2005. Referred to Committee on Health Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to coverage for hearing aids; adding a new section  
2 to chapter 41.05 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 48.20 RCW; adding  
3 a new section to chapter 48.21 RCW; adding a new section to chapter  
4 48.44 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 48.46 RCW; and creating a  
5 new section.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the inability to  
8 purchase hearing aids adversely affects hearing-impaired people of all  
9 ages and impacts the employment and educational opportunities of  
10 hearing-impaired children and adults in Washington state by limiting  
11 communication options. To provide these individuals with equal  
12 opportunity and protect the well-being of the population, the  
13 legislature intends to establish insurance coverage provisions for  
14 hearing aids.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 41.05 RCW  
16 to read as follows:

17 All state-purchased health care that provides coverage for  
18 prostheses shall include coverage for hearing aids. Covered hearing

1 instruments and related services shall be provided by a licensed  
2 audiologist or hearing instrument fitter/dispenser as authorized under  
3 chapter 18.35 RCW.

4 This section shall not be construed to prevent the application of  
5 standard health plan provisions applicable to other benefits such as  
6 deductible or copayment provisions. This section does not limit the  
7 authority of the state health care authority to negotiate rates and  
8 contract with specific providers for the delivery of prostheses. This  
9 section does not apply to medicare supplement policies or supplemental  
10 contracts covering a specified disease or other limited benefits.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 48.20 RCW  
12 to read as follows:

13 An insurer that offers to any individual a health benefit plan that  
14 provides coverage for prostheses shall include coverage for hearing  
15 aids. Covered hearing instruments and related services shall be  
16 provided by a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument  
17 fitter/dispenser as authorized under chapter 18.35 RCW.

18 This section does not limit the authority of the state health care  
19 authority to negotiate rates and contract with specific providers for  
20 the delivery of prostheses. This section does not apply to medicare  
21 supplement policies or supplemental contracts covering a specified  
22 disease or other limited benefits.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 48.21 RCW  
24 to read as follows:

25 A group insurance contract or blanket disability insurance contract  
26 that provides coverage for prostheses shall include coverage for  
27 hearing aids. Covered hearing instruments and related services shall  
28 be provided by a licensed audiologist or hearing instrument  
29 fitter/dispenser as authorized under chapter 18.35 RCW.

30 This section shall not be construed to prevent the application of  
31 standard health plan provisions applicable to other benefits such as  
32 deductible or copayment provisions. This section does not limit the  
33 authority of the state health care authority to negotiate rates and  
34 contract with specific providers for the delivery of prostheses. This  
35 section does not apply to medicare supplement policies or supplemental  
36 contracts covering a specified disease or other limited benefits.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 5.**    A new section is added to chapter 48.44 RCW  
2 to read as follows:

3        A health service contractor that provides coverage for prostheses  
4 shall include coverage for hearing aids.    Covered hearing instruments  
5 and related services shall be provided by a licensed audiologist or  
6 hearing instrument fitter/dispenser as authorized under chapter 18.35  
7 RCW.

8        This section shall not be construed to prevent the application of  
9 standard health plan provisions applicable to other benefits such as  
10 deductible or copayment provisions.    This section does not limit the  
11 authority of the state health care authority to negotiate rates and  
12 contract with specific providers for the delivery of prostheses.    This  
13 section does not apply to medicare supplement policies or supplemental  
14 contracts covering a specified disease or other limited benefits.

15        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 6.**    A new section is added to chapter 48.46 RCW  
16 to read as follows:

17        A health maintenance organization that provides coverage for  
18 prostheses shall include coverage for hearing aids.    Covered hearing  
19 instruments and related services shall be provided by a licensed  
20 audiologist or hearing instrument fitter/dispenser as authorized under  
21 chapter 18.35 RCW.

22        This section shall not be construed to prevent the application of  
23 standard health plan provisions applicable to other benefits such as  
24 deductible or copayment provisions.    This section does not limit the  
25 authority of the state health care authority to negotiate rates and  
26 contract with specific providers for the delivery of prostheses.    This  
27 section does not apply to medicare supplement policies or supplemental  
28 contracts covering a specified disease or other limited benefits.

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