**1222-S.E AMS HLTC S2344.1 - NOT FOR FLOOR USE**

**ESHB 1222** - S COMM AMD

By Committee on Health & Long Term Care

**ADOPTED 03/31/2023**

Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the following:

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

(1) For nongrandfathered group health plans other than small group health plans issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2024, a health carrier shall include coverage for hearing instruments, including bone conduction hearing devices. This section does not include coverage of over-the-counter hearing instruments.

(2) Coverage shall also include the initial assessment, fitting, adjustment, auditory training, and ear molds as necessary to maintain optimal fit. Coverage of the services in this subsection shall include services for enrollees who intend to obtain or have already obtained any hearing instrument, including an over-the-counter hearing instrument.

(3) A health carrier shall provide coverage for hearing instruments as provided in subsection (1) of this section at no less than $3,000 per ear with hearing loss every 36 months.

(4) The services and hearing instruments covered under this section are not subject to the enrollee's deductible unless the health plan is offered as a qualifying health plan for a health savings account. For such a qualifying health plan, the carrier may apply a deductible to coverage of the services covered under this section only at the minimum level necessary to preserve the enrollee's ability to claim tax exempt contributions and withdrawals from the enrollee's health savings account under internal revenue service laws and regulations.

(5) Coverage for a minor under 18 years of age shall be available under this section only after the minor has received medical clearance within the preceding six months from:

(a) An otolaryngologist for an initial evaluation of hearing loss; or

(b) A licensed physician, which indicates there has not been a substantial change in clinical status since the initial evaluation by an otolaryngologist.

(6) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Hearing instrument" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 18.35.010.

(b) "Over-the-counter hearing instrument" has the same meaning as "over-the-counter hearing aid" in 21 C.F.R. Sec. 800.30 as of December 28, 2022.

**Sec.**  RCW 41.05.830 and 2018 c 159 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Subject to appropriation, a health plan offered to employees and their covered dependents under this chapter issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2019, must include coverage for hearing instruments. Coverage must include a new hearing instrument every five years and services and supplies such as the initial assessment, fitting, adjustment, and auditory training.

(2) The hearing instrument must be recommended by a licensed audiologist, hearing aid specialist, or a licensed physician or osteopathic physician who specializes in otolaryngology and dispensed by a licensed audiologist, hearing aid specialist, or a licensed physician or osteopathic physician who specializes in otolaryngology.

(3) For the purposes of this section, "hearing instrument" and "hearing aid specialist" have the same meaning as defined in RCW 18.35.010.

(4) This section expires December 31, 2023.

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

A health plan offered to public employees and their covered dependents under this chapter issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2024, is subject to section 1 of this act."

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**ADOPTED 03/31/2023**

On page 1, at the beginning of line 2 of the title strike the remainder of the title and insert "amending RCW 41.05.830; adding a new section to chapter 48.43 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 41.05 RCW; and providing an expiration date."

EFFECT: Removes language directing OIC to include hearing instruments in any update of the state's essential health benefits.