



STATE of RHODE ISLAND  
Executive Department  
GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES  
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## Legislative Impact Statement

To: Representative Donovan, Chairperson  
From: Elisabeth Hubbard, Executive Secretary  
Re: 25 House 5218

Thursday, March 13, 2025

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities' Legislation Committee has developed a Legislative Impact Statement on the bill listed below. The Commission would be pleased to present testimony to the committee. Please contact me (462-0110) if testimony is desired or for additional information.

Introduced by Representative McEntee

Increases insurance coverage for hearing aids from one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) to one thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$1,750), per ear, for all people regardless of age effective January 1, 2026.

### **Legislation Committee finds this bill Beneficial**

Hearing aid prices vary widely between \$1000-\$8000. Because of the cost variance, may be forced to settle for a hearing aid that is not the best fit for them as determined by their physician or audiologist. They may even have to resort to less expensive and less effective over-the-counter hearing aids which are only suitable for people with mild hearing loss and not those with profound hearing loss.

According to the State of Rhode Island, Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing approximately 20.3% of Rhode Islanders have experienced some loss of hearing in at least one ear. This was from a study from 2011 but as the population of RI is aging overall this could be even higher now. Furthermore, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communicative Disorders only 30% of people 70 and older and only 16% of people aged 16-69 who could benefit from hearing aids actually have them. Given those estimates, it could be inferred that there are tens of thousands of individuals who could benefit from hearing aids in RI. Increasing the amount for insurance coverage would make hearing aids more accessible to these Rhode Island residents.

cc: Representative McEntee

Rico Vota, Governor's Office of Legislative Affairs

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