



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 177		DATE: 1/28/2025	
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ALLEN SCHELP		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: elroycpa@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 5:10 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

My 17-yr-old son Nathan wears hearing aids. A hearing impairment is just one of the many disabilities he has. It is also the one disability that can be "fixed" through the usage of hearing aids. The ability to hear is important for him to be able to participate and contribute to society. Currently our insurance covers the cost of his hearing aids, but when he becomes an adult, he will likely shift to MOHealthNet and the hearing aids will not be covered. My son has the ability to hear with hearing aids. Please allow him to continue hearing throughout adulthood by passing this bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 11:57 PM
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: BRENT HEMPHILL		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI SPEECH LANGUAGE HEARING ASSOCIATION		TITLE:
ADDRESS: PO BOX 156		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CHRISTINA KOEHLER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: CINDY CLARK		PHONE NUMBER: 636-534-5200
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMMAUS HOMES		TITLE: PRESIDENT & CEO
ADDRESS: 3731 MUELLER RD		
CITY: ST. CHARLES		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 63301
EMAIL: clarkc@emmaushomes.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 10:39 AM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

Emmaus Homes is a 130-year-old developmental disability services provider that supports adults with disabilities in their own homes in the community. We serve Missourians in the St. Charles and St. Louis region. Many of the adults our staff support are elderly, and many have aged into hearing loss. All of our clients have a Medicaid waiver, meaning their health insurance is also through Medicaid. While a handful of the over 200 adults we serve may be able to private pay for items like hearing aids, most are on fixed incomes, relying on Medicaid for services and healthcare and then Social Security for rent, utilities, food, and other expenses. To ensure our clients get what they need no matter what, we work with their case managers to find grants or other sources of income to cover the cost of hearing aids. We even use some of our fundraising to cover these items as well. We believe that Medicaid should cover these items as they are critical to our clients successfully being integrated into the community and having a great quality of life, which all people with hearing loss deserve. Please support HB 177. Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ELIZABETH BRENNAN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kohlea@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 12:50 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I am writing as a clinical audiologist of 20+ years, asking you to support HB177 for coverage of hearing related devices for Missouri adults. Currently Missouri covers these devices for our pediatric citizens, however this coverage ends right when they are ready to enter higher education or the workforce. As a result, this limits their ability to fully contribute to their family and community. Hearing loss affects all ages and hearing healthcare should not end simply because of an individual's age. Please support this bill to ensure all of our Missouri residents achieve their full potential through the advanced technology available to treat their hearing loss.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: EUGENE J. MEYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: eugenejmeyer@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 1:13 PM
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I have a hearing loss and wear hearing aids. The aids are crucial to my well being and ability to be productive. Expanding the coverage of hearing aids and other related hearing devices to HealthNet recipients is very important. I support this bill and encourage passage of the bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ISABELLA MENDOZA		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: isabella.mendoza@slu.edu	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 8:58 PM
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: JUSTIN ALFERMAN		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: SSM HEALTH		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: MO
		ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KATE SINKS, AUD, ABAC, CCCA		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KAY PARK		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KORTNIE HUDDLESTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kortniehuddleston@gmail.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 8:09 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I urge you to support HB177 and HB469. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are essential for individuals with hearing impairments or complete hearing loss. The Hearing Industries Association reports that the average cost of prescription hearing aids ranges from \$1,000 to \$4,000, depending on the severity of the hearing loss. In Missouri, the income threshold for individuals receiving healthcare through MO HealthNet is \$19,392, and for a family of four, it is \$39,900. I ask this committee to reflect on your own family’s annual income and expenses and consider whether an individual or family earning such a modest income could afford a \$2,500 medical expense just to regain the ability to hear. If this issue is debated in the same manner as similar issues I’ve seen in this committee, I anticipate that lobbyists for the health insurance industry will argue that adding services like hearing aids to healthcare plans will increase costs for everyone. While this may be true, it is a decision driven by the health insurance industry. At the same time, CEOs of major healthcare companies such as Anthem, Aetna, and United Healthcare are earning between \$15 million and \$25 million annually in salaries, bonuses, and stock options. This is yet another example of forcing those with the least to struggle for basic necessities while the wealthy continue to grow richer. As a taxpayer whose contributions fund programs like Medicaid, I want these funds to ensure that families covered by Medicaid are not merely surviving but thriving. I know many other Missourians share this sentiment. The ability to hear is fundamental to thriving. I respectfully ask you to vote “do pass” on these bills.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KRISTEN LEWIS, AUD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: MALLORY RUSCH		PHONE NUMBER: 314-306-8945	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 104900			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65110
EMAIL: mallory@empowermissouri.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 12:04 PM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

Date: January 28, 2025 To: Chairman Stinnett and Members, House Health & Mental Health Committee From: Mallory Rusch, Executive Director, Empower Missouri RE: Our support for HB 177 and HB 469 Empower Missouri has spent more than 120 years fighting poverty in Missouri. Today, we come to present testimony on a bill which specifically targets our neighbors with the lowest incomes. On behalf of our staff, board, and coalition members we are asking you to support HB 177 and HB 469. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are critical resources for individuals with hearing impairment or a full loss of hearing. According to the Hearing Industries Association, the average cost of prescription hearing aids ranges between \$1,000 and \$4,000, depending on the severity of the hearing loss. In Missouri, the income cap for individuals receiving healthcare through MO HealthNet is \$20,814. The income cap for a family of four is \$42,759. I would implore this committee to consider your own families' annual income and expenses, and then consider if you feel like an individual or family earning this low of an income could manage to afford a \$2,500 medical bill just to be able to hear. If this issue is debated the way that I've seen similar issues debated in this committee, I'm sure that lobbyists for the health insurance industry will tell you that when you add additional services, like hearing aids, to healthcare plans, the prices will go up for everyone on those plans. That may be the case, but that is a choice made by the health insurance industry. Meanwhile, CEOs of major healthcare companies like Anthem, Aetna and United Healthcare are raking in between \$15M and \$25M annually in salaries, bonuses, and stock options. This is simply another case of forcing those with the least among us to beg for basic necessities while the rich get richer. As a taxpayer whose tax dollars go to fund programs like Medicaid, I want those funds to ensure that families covered by Medicaid aren't just surviving, but thriving. I know that there are many, many other Missourians who agree with me. The ability to hear is necessary to thrive. Please vote "do pass" on these bills.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mdreyer93@gmail.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 8:07 PM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

I ask you to support HB177 and HB469. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are critical resources for individuals with hearing impairment or a full loss of hearing. According to the Hearing Industries Association, the average cost of prescription hearing aids ranges between \$1,000 and \$4,000, depending on the severity of the hearing loss. In Missouri, the income cap for individuals receiving healthcare through MO HealthNet is \$19,392. The income cap for a family of four is \$39,900. I would implore this committee to consider your own families' annual income and expenses, and then consider if you feel like an individual or family earning this low of an income could manage to afford a \$2,500 medical bill just to be able to hear. If this issue is debated the way that I've seen similar issues debated in this committee, I'm sure that lobbyists for the health insurance industry will tell you that when you add additional services, like hearing aids, to healthcare plans, the prices will go up for everyone on those plans. That may be the case, but that is a choice made by the health insurance industry. Meanwhile, CEOs of major healthcare companies like Anthem, Aetna and United Healthcare are raking in between \$15M and \$25M annually in salaries, bonuses, and stock options. This is simply another case of forcing those with the least among us to beg for basic necessities while the rich get richer. As a taxpayer whose tax dollars go to fund programs like Medicaid, I want those funds to ensure that families covered by Medicaid aren't just surviving, but thriving. I know that there are many, many other Missourians who agree with me. The ability to hear is necessary to thrive. Please vote "do pass" on these bills.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: PAYTON GUINN		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: paytonsguinn@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 9:19 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

I am an audiologist based out of Dardenne Prairie, Missouri, and I am asking you to support HB177 for coverage of hearing related devices for Missouri adults. Currently, these devices are covered for Missouri children. As these children are aging into the workforce or higher education, they lose coverage of these devices. This leaves them unable to communicate and participate in the everyday life. I am asking you to please extend this coverage to adult Missouri residents as well.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: RANDY SCHERR		PHONE NUMBER: 573-636-6200	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI HEARING SOCIETY		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 101 E. HIGH			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: rjscherr@swllc.us.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 10:56 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: SALENA KENNEDY		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: kennedys@chsstl.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/27/2025 12:35 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

As a hearing aid wearer and Hearing healthcare professional, I understand the difficulties of acquiring quality hearing aids. I am lucky that I have been fortunate and have been able to always afford my devices. However, if I should ever fall on hard times and need new aids to perform my job and have quality of life, I would find it reassuring to know that I can get professional care and replacement aids via Mo Healthnet. Assuring that I could still be a productive member of society.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH PRECHTEL		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: slograsso@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 8:44 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Providing Medicaid coverage for hearing aids and cochlear implants for all adults is essential for improving overall quality of life, increasing workforce participation, and promoting health equity. Speaking from personal and professional experience, these devices help individuals who benefit from hearing aid(s) and or cochlear implant(s) to communicate effectively, maintain social connections, and prevent the mental health challenges often associated with untreated hearing loss, such as depression, cognitive decline, and social isolation. Addressing hearing loss also reduces long-term healthcare costs by mitigating risks of other health complications. Ensuring equitable access to hearing aids and cochlear implants allows low-income individuals to participate fully in society, pursue educational opportunities, and maintain functional independence. By offering coverage, Medicaid can support inclusivity and empower individuals to lead healthier, more connected lives.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CLARK COROGENES		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: ccorogenes@thewholeperson.org		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 9:45 AM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

my concerns about MO Healthnet coverage of hearing relation devices:Most times and not successful often for adult or older individuals who become late-deafened or hearing loss or speech impaired will struggle, hard to acquire or inability with hearing-related devices. They will have bad experiences and frustrations with identifying sounds or noises or barriers by communicating with their loved ones, family members or professionals. Strong recommendation that adds more coverages and services for adult or older individuals have a good opportunity with many communicate options: -American sign language therapy -English-based sign language therapy-Sign Language Tutors available-Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing loss mentorships -Setup peer support groups, fellowships, host events Providing a scholarship for sign language courses or workshops through communities like advocacy services providers or education centers or higher education like community colleges or universities.Preferred coverages only hearing aids, not cochlear implants, and come with teach a sign languages



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JEFFREY L BRUNTMYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: jbruntmyer50@outlook.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 4:29 PM
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I Oppose This Bill



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SANDY SMITH		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: immssmittyuc@gmail.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/28/2025 3:02 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			