



March 3, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Kristie Iacuess, I am a Doctor of Audiology and the owner of a private practice, Yarmouth Audiology, in Yarmouth, Maine. I have been practicing audiology in the state of Maine since 2002 and have served as the secretary and president of the Maine Academy of Audiology and currently serve as an audiologist on the Board of Speech, Audiology, and Hearing, a position appointed by the Governor. The responsibilities of the Board are to evaluate qualifications of and examine applicants, grant licenses to those who meet board requirements, investigate complaints and take disciplinary action against licensees when warranted.

I am writing today in support of LD 167 "An Act to Provide 2 Hearing Aids to MaineCare Members with Diagnosed Hearing Loss." Hearing loss is a medical condition that has many side effects, including, but not limited to, cognitive decline, social isolation, anxiety, depression, risk of falls, and safety concerns, such as not hearing alarms, or car horns.

Studies show that 80% of hearing losses can be treated with hearing aids. I understand that currently MaineCare will provide one hearing aid to qualifying patients, however when there is bilateral hearing loss, these patients should be fit with two hearing aids. The majority of my hearing aid patients have bilateral hearing loss, and at diagnosis they often ask, "do I need two hearing aids?" I tell them yes, wearing one hearing aid would be like wearing a single lens in glasses if you have vision loss in both eyes. Our brains expect to receive sound input from both ears equally, and there are many advantages to binaural hearing. Binaural hearing allows the brain to process more efficiently which leads to reduced listening effort, improved speech understanding in noise, improved speech clarity, and is necessary for sound localization, which is vital for safety.

LD 167 will provide MaineCare patients that have bilateral hearing loss the opportunity to receive two hearing aids which will help mitigate risks to the above conditions. This will not only improve Maine patients' quality of life but could also reduce the number of MaineCare claims for the side effects patients with hearing loss experience.

I have dedicated my professional career to helping Mainers hear better and feel LD 167 is an important act to help the most vulnerable in our great state to hear better.

Sincerely,

Kristie Iacuess, Au.D.
Owner
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