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Testimony of Representative Anne Graham in support of
**LD 1413, An Act to Amend Laws Governing Hearing Aid Dealers and Health Insurance
to Allow an Exception to Certain Hearing Examination Requirements**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Good afternoon, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services. I am proud to cosponsor **LD 1413, An Act to Amend Laws Governing Hearing Aid Dealers and Health Insurance to Allow an Exception to Certain Hearing Examination Requirements**.

This bill changes provisions of law governing insurance coverage for hearing aids and hearing aid dealing and fitting practices to allow an exception to a requirement that an individual attend an ear or hearing examination prior to obtaining a replacement hearing aid if that individual is too ill or infirm to safely attend the examination.

As Senator Bennett so eloquently noted, Joan Woodcock Nestler was the beloved matriarch of the Bangor Woodcocks. She and her husband, John, were two of my parents' best friends. John, an orthopedic surgeon, and my dad, Tom Palmer, a general surgeon. They traveled by train to Bangor to do their Tufts Medical School residency in the early 1950s. They both fell in love with Bangor girls, Joan Carlin, and my mom, Mary Ellen Herlihy. The Woodcock family with seven children and the Palmer family with five children grew up in Bangor and several continue to still call it their home.

I remember my parents being invited to the Woodcock's cottage at Hancock Point for light libations and I got to tag along. Listening to the conversation of the day helped shape my young world view. My mom and dad and John have long been residing in heaven, but Joan stayed with us for many more years. She was forever teaching and caring for her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and a few lucky stray kids who crashed adult gatherings. I thank Senator Bennett and his aide, Eliza Woodcock, for allowing me to testify in support of this important bill.

Coincidentally, I had a hearing aid bill that was heard before my Health and Human Services committee recently, LD 167, An Act to Provide 2 Hearing Aids to MaineCare Members with Diagnosed Hearing Loss. It was brought to me by a young audiologist who shared with me that MaineCare only covers the cost of one hearing aid. My reaction was "that's ridiculous" and embarked on changing the law. When one can only hear through one ear the brain must exert significant effort to process the imbalanced auditory input, leading to increased listening fatigue and cognitive strain, particularly during extended conversations or in noisy environments.

District 105: North Yarmouth and Gray

Now, consider that you are over 100 years old and in hospice care and you are struggling to hear the words that your loved ones would like to share with you. An individual in this situation should not be mandated to go to have an outside hearing examination in order to replace a lost hearing aid. I would suggest that would be considered unnecessary and somewhat inhumane.

Joan, Eliza's grandmother, my parents' and my friend, should not have had to struggle the last days of her life trying to hear. I urge you, my esteemed colleagues, to pass LD 1413 so no other Maine elder has to struggle.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.