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H.19

Introduced by Representatives Poirier of Barre City and Dakin of Chester  
Referred to Committee on  
Date:  
Subject: Health; health insurance; hearing aids  
Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require health insurance coverage for hearing aids and to direct the Green Mountain Care Board to consider including coverage for hearing aids as part of Green Mountain Care.

An act relating to health insurance coverage for hearing aids

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 8 V.S.A. chapter 107, subchapter 15 is added to read:

Subchapter 15. Hearing Aids

§ 4100I. COVERAGE FOR HEARING AIDS

(a) A health insurance plan shall provide coverage for the professional services associated with the practice of fitting, dispensing, servicing, or selling hearing aids or a combination thereof for all enrollees for whom a hearing aid is determined by the individual's treating audiologist or hearing aid dispenser to be audiologically appropriate.

1       (b)(1) The plan shall provide coverage for a hearing aid for each ear for  
2       which the audiologist or hearing aid dispenser determines amplification to be  
3       audiologically appropriate, as well as all related services necessary to assess,  
4       select, and fit the hearing aid, with a maximum for the hearing aid and related  
5       services of no less than \$1,500.00 per ear every 60 months.

6       (2) An insured may choose a hearing aid priced higher than the plan  
7       coverage and pay the difference in cost.

8       (c) The benefits included in this section shall not be subject to any greater  
9       deductible or cost-sharing requirement than that which would apply to any  
10       other benefits provided by the health insurance plan.

11       (d) As used in this subchapter:

12       (1) "Audiologist" means a person licensed to practice audiology  
13       pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 87.

14       (2) "Health insurance plan" means any health insurance policy or health  
15       benefit plan offered by a health insurer, as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9402, that is  
16       licensed to do business in Vermont but does not include policies or plans  
17       providing coverage for specified diseases or other limited benefit coverage.

18       (3) "Hearing aid" means an amplifying device or other hearing  
19       instrument to be worn by a hearing-impaired person to improve hearing,  
20       including any accessories specifically used in connection with such a device,  
21       but excluding theater or auditorium wide-area listening devices, telephone

1 amplifiers, or other devices designed to replace a hearing aid for restricted  
2 situations.

3 (4) "Hearing aid dispenser" means a person licensed to dispense hearing  
4 aids pursuant to 26 V.S.A. chapter 67.

5 (5) "Practice of fitting, dispensing, servicing, or selling hearing  
6 instruments" means the measurement of human hearing with an audiometer  
7 calibrated to the current American National Standard Institute standards for the  
8 purpose of making selections, recommendations, adoptions, services, or sales  
9 of hearing aids and includes the making of earmolds as part of the hearing aid.

10 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 1825(a)(4)(A) is amended to read:

11 (4)(A) The Green Mountain Care Board established in 18 V.S.A.  
12 chapter 220 shall consider whether to include dental, vision, and hearing  
13 benefits, including hearing aids and related services, in the Green Mountain  
14 Care benefit package.

15 Sec. 3. APPLICABILITY AND EFFECTIVE DATES

16 (a) Sec. 1 shall take effect on October 1, 2015 and shall apply to all health  
17 insurance plans on and after October 1, 2015 on such date as a health insurer  
18 offers, issues, or renews the health insurance plan, but in no event later than  
19 October 1, 2016.

20 (b) The remaining sections shall take effect on July 1, 2015.