

ASSEMBLY HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 856

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 10, 2020

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 856.

This bill requires Medicaid coverage for hearing aids and other assistive devices for the hearing impaired under certain circumstances.

Specifically, the bill provides that coverage under the Medicaid Program includes expenses for unilateral or bilateral hearing aids, cochlear implants, or auditory osseointegrated devices, as well as any related accessories or services, provided that the devices, accessories, and services are deemed to be medically necessary and are prescribed or recommended by a licensed physician or audiologist.

Under the bill, a “hearing aid” means an ear-level or body-worn electroacoustic device for amplifying sound whose basic components are a microphone, amplifier, and receiver; a “cochlear implant” means a device that is implanted under the skin that picks up sounds and converts them to impulses transmitted to electrodes placed in the cochlea; and an “auditory osseointegrated device” means a device implanted in the skull that replaces the function of the middle ear and provides mechanical energy to the cochlea via a mechanical transducer. Furthermore, “bilateral” means relating to or involving both ears, while “unilateral” means relating to or involving one ear.

Currently, the State’s Medicaid Plan provides that hearing aids are a covered benefit for eligible participants of the Medicaid Program if the hearing aid is determined to be medically necessary. This bill codifies this existing provision, and expands upon the benefit to include cochlear implants and auditory osseointegrated devices, as well as any related accessories or services.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.