

HB 903 -- HEARING AIDS

SPONSOR: Kelley (127)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill allows the program administrator of the statewide telecommunications equipment distribution program to provide financial assistance to allow individuals whose household income is 75% of the federal poverty level, or less, to obtain hearing aids.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill focuses on getting hearing aids to a small group of individuals who are extremely impoverished. People with a limited income do not have access to hearing aids because they are considered a luxury item and this bill would help them gain access.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelley; Scott George; Mary Stodden; Linda Baker; Robert Honan; Opeoluwa Sotogwa, Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and Rachel Girdler, Empower Missouri.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say they would like to maintain their current level of funding. There has been a recommendation by the Public Service Commission to reduce the surcharge collected from \$.06 to \$.04 and they don't feel that there would be enough funds to maintain the program.

Testifying on the bill was David Baker, Missouri Assistive Technology.