

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Insurance
For HB 134

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Hearing Date: April 11, 2023 8:00 AM

Hannah Mehta, mother & Executive Director
self / Protect TX Fragile Kids
Flower Mound, TX

In support of HB134

Greer Beaumont
Hanger Clinic
Houston, TX

My name is Greer Beaumont and I am a Certified Orthotist at Hanger Clinic in Houston's Medical Center. As the lead cranial specialist for my region, I work closely with the Pediatric Neuro and Plastic Surgery teams at Texas Children's Hospital for both congenital and positional head shape abnormalities. Thank you for allowing me to testify my strong support of Texas House Bill 134.

In my practice, I treat 250+ babies a year to address their head shape deformities. With the implementation of the Back to Sleep Program in 1992, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome rates decreased by 50%. An additional result of this program was the significant increase of head shape deformities, or plagiocephaly, in young children. Plagiocephaly presents as one or more flattened areas of the skull due to repeated pressure on one part of the head. This is commonly due to in-utero or post-birth positioning, birthing complications, and/or a lack of neck range of motion secondary to a condition called torticollis. Often, these children have a syndrome or disease and/or developmental delays which contributes to their risk of a worsened deformity.

While some children's mild head shape deformities correct on their own or with the assistance of stretching through physical therapy, many children with moderate to severe deformities do not correct without a cranial remolding orthosis - these are the devices I provide. Cranial remolding orthoses use a baby's natural growth to correct their head shape. These helmets are a FDA regulated, custom-made device that is considered safe and effective treatment for plagiocephaly. Studies have shown that cranial remolding orthoses have lead to significant improvements in the child's head shape and overall quality of life.

Texas HB 134 proposes that the state's Medicaid program provide coverage for CROs for children with plagiocephaly. Without these corrective devices, children with severe head shape deformities can experience negative psychological impacts such as appearance-related bullying as well as the potential for secondary health effects. For example, a severely asymmetric head shape can negatively affect the alignment of jaw and ear anatomy increasing the risk of health issues as the child grows. I have met with numerous families who were ready to pursue helmet treatment for their child and were unable to afford the self-pay cost as Medicaid would not cover the treatment. By the time funds were gathered for the treatment, to the family's dismay, the child was outside the age parameters and the helmet would no longer be effective.

Passing Texas HB 134 will provide the children of Texas access to care that will significantly impact their quality of life. By providing coverage for cranial remolding orthoses for children with moderate to severe plagiocephaly, the state can ensure that these children receive the quality care required for optimal health and development. I support Texas HB 134 and urge the legislature to pass it into law.

Brittany Jones, Licensed and Certified Orthotist/ Prosthetist
self and Hanger Clinic: Cedar Park, Texas Pediatric Specialty Care Center
Pflugerville, TX

Good morning, thank you for allowing my statement to be heard on this very important matter. My statement serves to testify in favor of HB 134. My name is Brittany Jones and I am a certified and licensed orthotist and prosthetist for Hanger Clinic, here in Austin, Texas. I am a pediatric specialist within Hanger Clinic, specializing in Plagiocephaly, Bracycephaly, and like diagnoses.

HB 134 proposes that Medicaid provide coverage for the use of a custom fabricated cranial remolding orthosis for infants who have been diagnosed with plagiocephaly (a parallelogram- like flattening of the head shape), bracycephaly (a flattening of both sides of the back of the head, causing a triangular shape to the head), or scaphocephaly (a narrow elongation of the head). There are many reasons that these deformities occur including positioning in utero, prolonged NICU stays, or as a result of tight muscles in the baby's neck causing them to favor looking to one side. Every corrective helmet is custom made to that child according to their current shape, size, and corrective needs. Use of a cranial helmet for head shape correction is not only for cosmetic purposes but also can correct noticeable facial asymmetries, ear asymmetries that can cause chronic ear infections, or even jaw malalignment causing clicking, eating and speech difficulties. Not correcting these asymmetries can later have negative social affects on the child as well and poor mental health associated with self-esteem and social acceptance.

Currently, Medicaid does not cover the cost of a cranial remolding helmet which prevents a very large community from receiving proper care for their infant due to financial constraints. Families who benefit from Medicaid services are doing so because of their need for financial assistance, which eliminates their ability to pay out of pocket for medical services. Having Medicaid coverage for your child should not be a deciding factor on whether an infant gets the proper care they need, or not. The current message we are sending these families by denying their coverage of these medical devices for their child is that they are being set apart from families with private insurance and not deserving of equal care. In my clinic, just a few miles from where you sit today, we are having these discussions with families about their ability or inability to fund a cranial helmet for their child every day and having to explain to them why Medicaid is the only insurance provider we can say with certainty will not cover the cost of the helmet. All other insurance providers are now considering full or partial coverage of these devices, singling out the Medicaid community.

All children are deserving of equal care and opportunity. I urge you to pass Texas HB 134 into law and make it known to these families that you are committed to the well-being of their children and equality of care. Thank you.

Susan Burek

Self: I'm a parent and a parent advocate for people with disabilities
Austin, TX

I strongly support HB 134, related to coverage for childhood cranial remolding orthosis under certain health benefit plans.

PLEASE VOTE FOR HB 134.

Thank you very much.