

WHEREAS, The Joint Committee on Infant Hearing recommends that whenever possible, the diagnostic process should be completed and habilitation begun by the age of 6 months; and

WHEREAS, Reduction of the auditory signal during the critical language-learning period can severely limit a child's ~~capacity~~ capability for developing a complete and effective communication system; and

WHEREAS, Delayed identification also delays instruction in speech and language, auditory training, and visual modes of communication, timely counseling, education for families, and medical intervention; and

WHEREAS, It is well documented that a delay in learning communication skills will preclude full benefit being derived from expensive educational/rehabilitation programs; and

WHEREAS, Hearing-impaired adults who suffer delayed identification and treatment are underemployed, with the majority engaged in semiskilled or unskilled positions which are highly vulnerable to job cuts and layoffs; and

WHEREAS, The General Assembly of Maryland has already recognized the value of early detection by providing for the detection of such disabilities as ~~hereditary metabolic disorders, PKU, and hypothyroidism~~; and

~~1--Hereditary-metabolic-disorders--(including--mental retardation);~~

~~2--Generrheal-vision-impairment;-and~~

WHEREAS, The General Assembly of Maryland enacted a law in 1982 providing the parents of children with any one of 12 sentinel birth defects with information and providing ~~anonymus~~ numerical information to the State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; and

WHEREAS, Early screening for auditory defects is not currently provided for despite the fact that auditory defects have a higher incidence ~~of--auditory--defects~~ in the general population than those that are presently mandated; and

WHEREAS, An estimated 6.8 percent of the approximately 61,000 annual live births in this State will eventually suffer a hearing impairment; and

WHEREAS, With early identification and follow-up of a child's hearing impairment, an effective communication system can be developed, significantly enhancing the quality of a child's life and his adult potential, and therefore reducing the potential burden to society; and