

September 3, 2020

Testimony for Older Vermonters Act, H 611 or final Bill number

Dear Senators:

Please add the word "hearing" to the Older Vermonters Act, in the section where it lists mental, physical, and dental health. Hearing disabilities are frequently undiagnosed and ignored to the detriment of public health. We need the word "hearing" inserted so that hearing loss is recognized as a critically important topic for elders.

- Mild hearing loss **doubles risk of dementia**. Source: Johns Hopkins Medicine and [read this](#)
- Untreated hearing loss increases **risk of falls by 50%** Source: <https://www.hearwellstayvital.org/>
- 1 in 10 people with untreated hearing loss suffer from **depression**. Source: NIH
- Hearing loss is a **public health crisis** per the National Academy of Science ([2016](#), [2017](#))
- 2020 Legislative report from The Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind Advisory Council found [online](#) lists more research and impacts of hearing loss on Vermonters

Most elders with hearing loss do not know they have this disease and burden, per 2020 [research](#). Most states have a Department of Hearing Loss and Deafness who help advocate for the hearing disabled. My experience as a person with hearing loss is that my disability is ignored, overlooked, and minimized in Vermont. Elders need us to identify and care for their hearing disability.

Adding the word "hearing" to the bill will do a world of good for elders in Vermont.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Chalmers

Rockingham, Vermont