

Hearing loss is a disability that affect a person's ability to function in every part of life. I did not start talking until age 4, which may have been due to hearing loss. Although my hearing was tested in school, I was told I had one "good" ear and that should be good enough. My parents did not have the financial resources nor did they know then that my hearing loss would progress to both ears. As a teen and young adult, I thought hearing loss was something I just had to live with. It affected my grades, my social life and family life.

My access to employment was even worse because my primary skill set was in administration and I frequently didn't apply for jobs because I worried my hearing disability would disqualify me. I purposely took employment that was far below my skill set just in order to have a job. Fortunately, when I was hired at VCIL I had access to all types of accommodations even before I had hearing aids.

I bought my first hearing aid out of pocket when I was in my 30's by emptying my entire savings and with the financial help of a generous friend. I had one hearing aid for over a decade because I couldn't afford a new one even though I really needed two hearing aids now. It wasn't until I got hearing aids through Medicaid that I finally had what I needed to help my hearing loss. Now that I'm fully employed, I worry about whether I'll be able to afford new hearing aids in the future.

I have friends who have tried to get hearing aids covered by Medicaid. Not all hearing aids are covered by Medicaid, even today. I was one of the lucky ones and I still have no idea why. It shouldn't be by chance that someone gets their hearing aids covered. I urge you to pass this bill so that all Vermonters can have access to hearing aids as a health care necessity.

Thank you for your time,
Nick Morlan
Montpelier, VT

