

Hello my name is Val Hughes and I am Deaf Independent Program coordinator at VCIL and also speaking on behalf of Vermont Coalition for Disability rights and have been involved with hearing aid bill H.266 along with Hear Hear Vermont coalition. Did you know that Vermont is only one state out of New England area that does not have an insurance coverage for hearing aids? We have done helping people **during past 14 months, VCIL provided \$105,000 worth of hearing aids using our RISE funds. That fund has been spent. The need of people applying for hearing aid funding far outweighs the funds available.** We need to change that. If I wanted hearing aids, I would have to switch insurance to my husband's insurance because his insurance is in New Hampshire. I could not afford hearing aids myself and it doesn't really work for me anyways. My husband's boss is hard of hearing and he had to switch over to NH for this reason. He had to do this for himself and his wife as well. My step dad Tim Arsenault also had to get some help in paying for his hearing aids as well. He was lucky that he got a bit help from Vocational Rehabilitation since he needed it for work. Hearing aids are expensive and yet, insurance will cover cochlear implants but not all of us want this. I have seen both pro's and con's for cochlear implants. I used to work at Austine School for the Deaf and unfortunately the school has closed down but we have had several students who has cochlear implants and some of them were not having any success with it either. I also have a hard of hearing daughter who do wears hearing aids for school. She is able to hear better with it. Right now, she has coverage but when she is older than 18 then she will have to pay out of pocket for the hearing aids. There is a good chance that she will probably struggle in the future if the insurance does not cover. There is also other thing to worry about is hearing aids repairs and new ear molds. It does cost quite a bit as well. I would love to see the insurance companies to cover both hearing aids and repairs.