

Dear Chair Black and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

I'm writing on behalf of the Vermont Center for Independent Living and the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights. VCIL is a statewide disability justice organization of people working together for dignity, independence, and civil rights and VCDR is an organization comprised of over 24 organizations in Vermont working together to advance the rights of individuals with disabilities.

I am writing to express our strong support for H.432, *An act relating to health insurance coverage for prosthetic and orthotic devices*. We were excited to see you taking the bill up this session and centering the experiences of people with lived experience in committee testimony. As you continue your review of this bill on Thursday, we wanted to share our support on this important legislation.

H.432 fills an important gap. By ensuring consistent, equitable coverage for prosthetic and orthotic devices, this bill will significantly improve quality of life for individuals. Its focus aligns with the Legislature's longstanding commitment to fairness and accessible care.

Far too often, people who rely on prosthetic or orthotic supports face unpredictable or insufficient coverage, leaving them with financial challenges on top of the physical and emotional stress of adapting to living with a disability. H.432 helps remove those barriers.

This is not only a human centered response, but a fiscally responsible one too. When people receive the devices, that they need to stay mobile, active, and independent, they are far less likely to experience preventable injuries, long-term complications, or secondary health conditions that can arise from limited mobility. By ensuring access to these essential devices now, Vermont can reduce future healthcare costs while supporting healthier, more fulfilling lives for those who need them.

People with disabilities continue to face significant barriers, not because of their disabilities but because the structures, systems, and environments around them are too often built without their participation or perspectives in mind. Public attention frequently shifts toward what individuals must do to "overcome" challenges or how "inspiring" their efforts appear, but this framing is rooted in ableism and obscures the real issue: the need for policies, environments, and attitudes that stop creating obstacles in the first place. These systemic barriers restrict mobility, independence, and full social and economic participation, preventing many disabled Vermonters from realizing their full human potential.

Shifting our focus toward removing environmental and structural barriers, rather than placing responsibility on individuals, is essential to building a truly inclusive and equitable society and this bill helps do just that. Ensuring access to medically necessary prosthetic and orthotic devices is part of that broader commitment and recognizes that these devices are not special accommodations, but tools that enable people to navigate a world that has not always been designed with them in mind. This approach promotes real inclusion and equity, allowing people with disabilities to participate fully in their communities.

I urge the committee to advance H.432 and help move Vermont toward a more equitable and supportive health care system. Doing so will make a real, tangible difference in the lives of individuals and families across the state.

Thank you for your time. I appreciate the careful work you do and the thoughtful attention you bring to legislation like this.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Launderville". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Launderville
Executive Director

President, Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights