

April 27, 2026

Dear House Committee on Human Services,

We are members of the Vermont Communication Task Force, a statewide network established in the year 2000. The fundamental philosophy of our Task Force is that all persons are competent, can communicate, and must receive the support, training and technology needed to actively participate in all aspects of life. Our group provides information and training to transition-age youth and adults with developmental disabilities, family members, educators, service providers, and community members. Our work is multi-faceted, focusing on the individual, local, and state systems to provide resources, information and advocacy.

We recently learned of the J.R.H.9. Resolution that is being considered in your committee. We greatly appreciate our state lawmakers recognizing the importance of communication access for all Vermonters. However, we have some concerns about the bill in its current form, which focuses on a single communication method (RPM) and ASHA's resistance to it. We recommend modifying the resolution so it is focused on the right of every person to access their preferred method of communication and the support strategies that work best for them. A shift in the focus of the bill will have a meaningful impact on the life of any Vermonter who uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), which includes a wide range of communication methods.

The Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) has long-held a statement on communication choice, which can be found on the state website [here](#). An amended resolution focused around communication choice would be in closer alignment with DAIL's stance, which has included a commitment to support access to training and technology, oversight, and best practice for all methods of communication. A statement on communication choice is also in alignment with the recommendations of national self-advocacy groups like [CommunicationFIRST](#) and [United for Communication Choice](#).

A similar bill is currently in progress in the state of New York which can be referenced [here](#). This bill was developed by a New York advocacy group that includes individuals involved with various communication methods including Rapid Prompting Method (RPM), Facilitated Communication (FC), and Spelling to Communicate (S2C). The bill states “In order to ensure that each person with a disability is able to lead a life of dignity, all persons with a disability shall have the right to communicate in their preferred manner and utilize any communication supports that meet their needs, and all staff and providers under this section, shall ensure and acknowledge such rights.” We feel that similar language would be beneficial in a Vermont resolution. The bill’s language clearly outlines the state’s commitment to ensuring that all individuals will be supported to access the communication method of their choosing, and highlights the responsibility of providers supporting this population to uphold these rights.

We are grateful to our representatives for demonstrating a commitment to honor and uphold the right of all individuals to communicate and make meaningful choices for their own lives. We ask that you consider our proposed changes to the language of the bill, as we feel this will have the most meaningful and lasting impact on Vermonters with communication access needs.

Sincerely,

The Vermont Communication Task Force Workgroup