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**Affiliation, if applicable**

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**Town/City**

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**Topic**

Other

**Comment**

As an audiologist for over 35 years, I have seen first-hand the impact of hearing loss on all ages. Numerous studies have linked untreated hearing loss to many social and economic factors, including depression, withdrawal, reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety, impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks. Untreated hearing loss also aligns with reduced job performance and earning potential, as well as diminished psychological and overall health. Hearing aids are not within the financial reach of a significant number of individuals and although I've spent hours exploring financial assistance options for patients, it is a barrier that is not always overcome.

I urge DVHA to make a specific and concrete recommendation to the Green Mountain Care Board that hearing aids and related hearing loss services be covered as part of the state's federal application to update the Essential Health Benefits plans offered in Vermont. We need to match, if not exceed, the hearing benefits available through our neighboring states. Not only is it the right thing to do for the betterment of Vermonters, it makes perfect financial sense.

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Yes