

# TESTIMONIALS IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1078 / SENATE BILL 5210

## Telecoil and Bluetooth Consumer Education for Hearing Aid Buyers

**Greg Bawden**  
**King County Fire Department Battalion Chief**  
**Past President, Hearing Loss Association of America –**  
**Washington Association (HLAA-WA)**



*People with hearing loss face significant social, health, and economic challenges. We need audiologists to provide us information on all options, including telecoils and Bluetooth.*

I am responsible for training and emergency management for a small fire department in King County. I have served as an elected member of my local school district board of directors, as a board member, and chair, for the Puget Sound Educational Service District, on the committee for the annual firefighter stair climb fundraiser, and as a volunteer at Camp Parsons, for the Chief Seattle Council of the Boy Scouts of America. **I would not be able to do ANY of these things without my telecoil and Bluetooth enabled hearing aids!**

I have spent over \$20,000 buying hearing aids from different audiologists. The first two did not offer me any information about telecoils. When I asked, the second audiologist discouraged me from getting them and provided misleading information. I finally found an audiologist who helped me find the technology I needed, which included telecoils and Bluetooth features

**Karen Utter**  
**Former Outreach Coordinator, President and State Chapter Coordinator,**  
**HLAA-WA**



*In sheer numbers, we are one of the top three most prevalent groups of people with disabilities. Yet hearing loss remains one of the least known and most ignored conditions in our society.*

HLAA does not sell products; we are a consumer/peer group of people who live with all degrees of hearing loss. The key to our identity, is that we do NOT use sign language but rely on our own voices to speak and technology to hear in many situations. To function effectively, we rely on technology that is both personal, such as hearing aids, assistive devices, and cochlear implants, and public – meaning assistive listening systems (ALS), which are mandated by the Federal ADA Law. However, in order to use public ALS, we must have telecoils in our personal devices – and know how to use them.

**Twenty years ago, and today, the most common question I hear is, “...what’s a Telecoil.”**

When a person purchases an expensive hearing aid, they need to know what type of device will best suit their needs and lifestyle. If they don’t get a telecoil-enabled device, it should be the consumer’s choice based on clear knowledge of the advantages they are giving up – not decided by a seller who decides what information to share or decides if they need it or not. Please support SB 5210 and/or HB 1078 to ensure people in need of hearing aids, receive the information they need to make an informed choice.



For more information, visit:  
[www.hearingloss-wa.org](http://www.hearingloss-wa.org)  
[www.loopseattle.org](http://www.loopseattle.org)

**Kimberly Parker**  
**Performance Artist**  
**Gallaudet Certified Hearing Loss Peer Mentor**

*When I finally learned how to use my telecoil, I discovered that a whole new world was available to me that I NEVER KNEW existed.*

I wore hearing aids for years without knowing I had a telecoil or what it could do for me. Living with profound hearing loss, I was severely depressed, isolated, angry, shut in and shut off from the world. **Once I learned about the telecoil, it literally transformed my life 100%! A simple switch on my hearing aids, that had been there the whole time, now enabled me communication access** to see a play at the Seattle Rep, or sit in on a meeting at Seattle City Hall, or hear a speaker at Town Hall – all venues with installed hearing loops!

Millions of Americans with hearing loss still live without knowing what a telecoil is or how to use it – they need legislation to ensure they are informed about telecoils and how to use them.



**Rick Faunt**  
**Retired U.S Navy Veteran and Boeing Electronics Technician**  
**Owner/ Installer, Now Hear This!**  
**Past President and State Leader, HLAA-WA**

*To me, not educating people with hearing loss about telecoils borders on malpractice, in that the full benefits of the hearing aid are not being utilized.*

Telecoils enable people with hearing loss to use a wide variety of assistive listening systems that connect to telecoil-enabled hearing aids. The combination of telecoils and assistive listening systems improves the quality of sound in public venues, giving people with hearing loss more contact with society and greater engagement in day to day living.

**Selling a hearing aid without including a telecoil – and educating the buyer of its presence and use – is much like a car dealer selling an automobile without the available options or even pointing out their existence and use.** Yes, a basic car will work, but it can be so much better with these options. Please support SB 5210 and/or HB 1078 to require consumer education about telecoil and Bluetooth technologies in hearing aids.



**Don Gischer**  
**Trainer, Network of Consumer Hearing Assistive Technology Trainers**  
**(N-CHATT)**  
**Member, HLAA-Whatcom County Chapter**

*It was only because of others who had telecoil-equipped hearing aids, that I learned of the improved sound without interference that makes them so indispensable.*

I was never informed about telecoils by my audiologists when I first started wearing hearing aids. **It was not until I informed my current audiologist that I wanted telecoils in my next set of aids, that I finally have them.** Please support SB 5210 and HB 1078!



**Erlene Little**  
**Membership Co-Chair, American Association of University Women,**  
**Whidbey Island Past Chapter Leader, HLAA – Anacortes Chapter**

*Telecoils are a necessity, enabling me to participate and be a productive member of our Whidbey Island community. All consumers deserve access to this invaluable information.*

When I first obtained hearing aids, I was never told about telecoils, and if my aids had telecoils, I was not told how to use them. **Ten years and three pairs of hearing aids later, my audiologist fitted me with bilateral hearing aids with telecoils. It has made all the difference in the world for me to better hear and understand speech.** A simple switch on my hearing aid, and I can hear clearly what is being said in meetings, in entertainment venues, in church, on TV; telecoils help me better hear my husband and children. All individuals with hearing loss deserve to be told about the availability of telecoils in their hearing aids.



**Diana Thompson**  
**Retired Attorney**  
**Past Chapter Leader, HLAA-Bellevue Chapter**  
**Legislative advocate for people with hearing loss**

*Hearing professionals too often do not tell clients about telecoils, or they provide incorrect information and advice, as example:*

- When I went to buy assistive listening equipment to work with my hearing aids, I discovered I only had a telecoil in one hearing aid, but should have had telecoils in both.
- Another time when in the process of purchasing hearing aids, **my audiologist asked me whether I wanted a manual or automatic telecoil – she neglected to tell me that automatic telecoils do not usually work with assistive listening equipment.**
- When a colleague gave a lecture about telecoils to the Aging and Disability Services Advisory Council, a friend in the audience said she did not have telecoils in her hearing aids. Luckily, she was still able to return them to Costco and buy hearing aids with telecoils.
- In November 2018, I went to the Seattle Repertory theatre which is looped, and thus enables people with telecoil-enabled hearing aids to hear better. I asked my friend if her husband, had telecoils in his hearing aids - they responded, “What?!” they had never heard of telecoils.



**Glenda Philio**  
**Dental Hygienist**  
**Trustee and Chapter Coordinator, HLAA-WA**

*A telecoil is a minute component in hearing aids, but such a small thing is the key to opening doors to a lot of opportunities.*

As my hearing deteriorated my world became smaller. It became increasingly difficult to understand the conversations; meetings were frustrating and unproductive; I couldn't keep up and was worried about my job. Even church became difficult as I couldn't read the pastor's lips from a distance. It got really scary when I couldn't understand my children in the backseat of my car.

When I learned about telecoils, I requested them in my next set of hearing aids. This change enabled me to use a neck loop to connect to various electronic devices to bring clear conversations directly into my ears. I nearly cried when I could hear the kids in the backseat. My world was again opened to me. **My career has continued because I have the tools to hear and treat my patients.**

