

# Please Support House Bill 1078 / Senate Bill 5210 Telecoil and Bluetooth Consumer Education for Hearing Aid Buyers

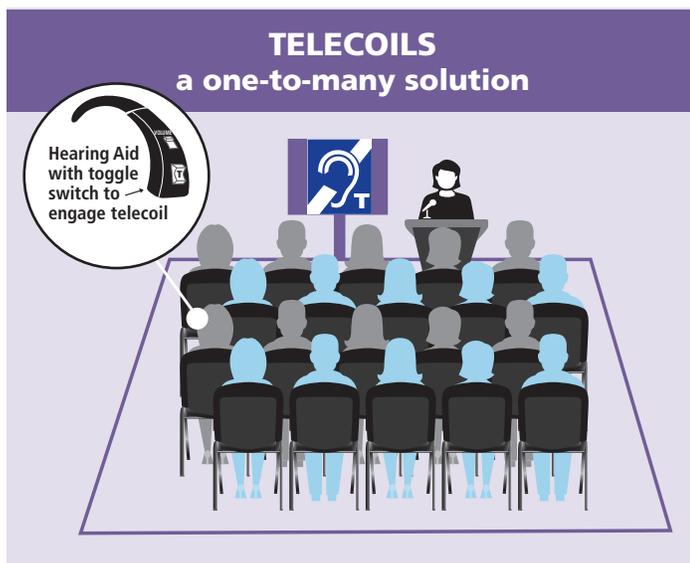
## About Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is a common disability that impacts people in every activity of day-to-day life. Telecoils can make a dramatic difference in a person's ability to hear clearly and participate in the programs and services of state and city governments, and in public environments such as medical centers, conference rooms, transportation hubs, lecture halls and classrooms, banks, entertainment venues and places of worship.

**Telecoils provide people with hearing loss what wheelchair ramps provide people with mobility challenges – access and independence. And yet, most consumers are not told about the benefits of telecoils.**

## What Is a Telecoil?

A telecoil is an essential feature in hearing aids and cochlear implants that **enables people to wirelessly connect to ADA mandated Assistive Listening Systems in public venues with their hearing devices.** When coupled with an Assistive Listening System, telecoils eliminate background noise and increase comprehension. Telecoils work with all ADA mandated Assistive Listening Systems: hearing loops<sup>1</sup>, FM, and Infrared. Hearing loops are unique in providing a direct audio connection to telecoil-enabled devices with no additional equipment required.

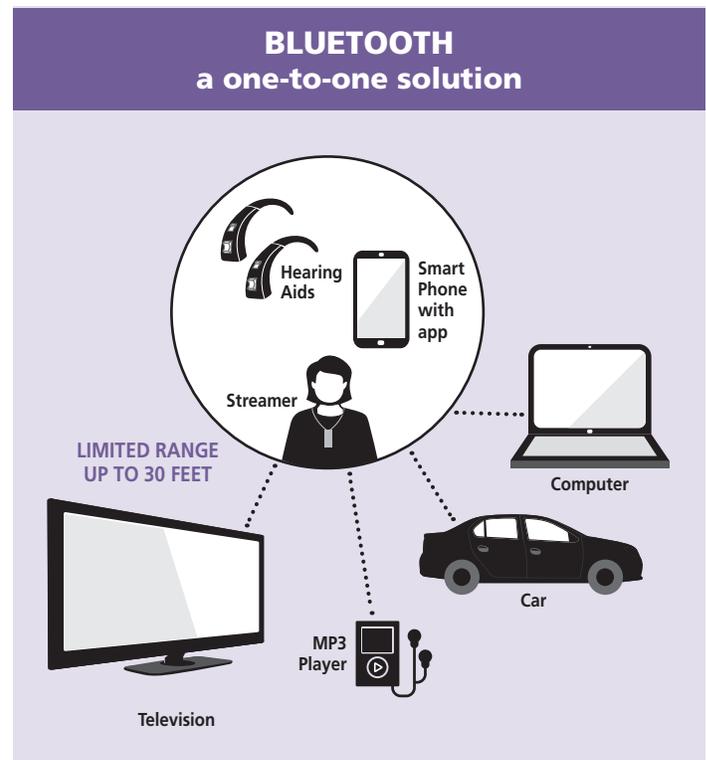


## How Telecoils Work With a Hearing Loop

In its simplest form, a hearing loop is a wire surrounding an assembly area that is connected to a hearing loop amplifier. The loop transmits a silent, electromagnetic signal carrying the sound from the microphone to telecoils that act as receivers in hearing aids or cochlear implants. For users without telecoils, the loop signal would be accessed using a receiver and headphones.

## What Is Bluetooth?

Bluetooth is a relatively short-range wireless technology used to connect hearing aids and cochlear implants to personal devices. While this technology is evolving, Bluetooth does not provide the long-range transmission required in large public venues, and does not serve multiple users.



## Why Both Telecoils and Bluetooth Should Be Offered to Hearing Aid Consumers

Telecoils and Bluetooth both serve important but very different purposes in the lives of people with hearing loss.

- **Telecoils provide a one-to-many solution** – delivering the audio signal from an Assistive Listening System simultaneously to every person with an activated, telecoil-enabled hearing device within the venue.
- **Bluetooth technology provides a one-to-one solution** – delivering enhanced audio streaming from personal technology devices to individuals with Bluetooth-enabled hearing devices.

Consumer advocates recommend hearing aid users be informed and have the benefits of both telecoils and Bluetooth demonstrated.

## Why Legislation Is Needed

Telecoils are standard or available in 70% of hearing aid models<sup>2</sup> and standard in 100% of current cochlear implants. **Yet a recent consumer survey revealed that almost two-thirds of first-time hearing aid buyers were not told about telecoils.**<sup>3</sup>

Without understanding telecoils, people with hearing loss might not choose the best hearing aids for their needs and lifestyle, nor experience the full functionality of their hearing aids. And they might not gain full public communication access, despite investing perhaps thousands of dollars in their hearing aids.

The proposed bill prioritizes this vital information by requiring audiologists and hearing aid dispensers to explain telecoils and Bluetooth to their patients and customers prior to initial fitting and purchase. **Just a few minutes of an audiologist's or hearing aid specialist's time can change the life of a person with hearing loss.**

Six states have already enacted similar consumer protection laws: Arizona, Delaware, Florida, New York, Rhode Island, and Utah. In 2019, similar legislation will likely be introduced in Indiana, Wisconsin, and New Mexico. **Washington State should help lead this consumer movement in support of people with hearing loss.**

### THIS LEGISLATION IS SUPPORTED BY

Hearing Loss Association of America

Hearing Loss Association of America Washington State Association

Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby –  
Unanimous support of member agencies

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing –  
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration  
Washington State Department of Social & Health Services

For a complete list of supporting organizations, see <https://loopseattle.org/Advocacy>

## Hearing Aid Consumers:

- Ask your state legislator to support HB 1078 / SB 5210
- Ask your hearing health provider about telecoils & bluetooth
- Ask your hearing health provider to support this consumer education legislation

## Washington State Legislators:

- Support hearing aid consumer education legislation with HB 1078 / SB 5210
- Learn about federally mandated communication access

1. Hearing Loops are also called induction loops and audio frequency induction loop systems (AFILS).

2. Derived from Consumer's Guide to Hearing Aids, 2018

3., 4., 5. Committee for Communications Access, New Mexico. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-W55CRM2Q/>

## Population Impact – Who Has Hearing Loss?

A substantial number of Americans live with hearing loss.

- 1 in 5 Americans has a hearing loss  
*Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2011*
- Nearly 50% of people older than 60 years have hearing loss  
*President's Council on Science and Technology 2015*
- Nearly 25% of Americans 65 to 74 and 50% of those 75 and older have disabling hearing loss  
*NIDCD, Quick Statistics about Hearing, December 2016*
- 2.7 million Veterans receive disability benefits for hearing loss or tinnitus. Hearing injury is the most common medical issue for veterans.  
*AARP.org, 2018*
- 19% of noise-exposed workers have a hearing loss  
*Worker Hearing Loss, CDC, 2017*
- Hearing loss among U.S. adults is projected to almost double by 2060, increasing to 73.5 million  
*Addressing Estimated Hearing Loss in Adults in 2060, NCBI-NIH, 2017*

## Consumer Desire for Telecoil Information

When asked, "If you are hard of hearing, do you believe audiologists and dispensers should be required to counsel their clients on telecoils prior to fitting them with hearing aids?" **95% of survey respondents answered "YES."**<sup>4</sup>

When asked, "If you are hard of hearing, would you like to see a law requiring such telecoil counseling in your state?" **92% of survey respondents answered "YES."**<sup>5</sup>

## Communication Access Is Required by Federal Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates Assistive Listening Systems in public venues. But people with hearing aids must have a telecoil enabled device – and know how to use it – in order to effectively connect to these systems.

When the features, benefits, and proper use of telecoil enabled hearing aids and cochlear implants are not explained, patients may choose a hearing device without a telecoil or the existing telecoil may not be activated, or the patient may not know how and when to use their telecoil.

## Resources

ADA 706.3: <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards>

HLAA: <https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/advocacy/know-your-rights/hac/>