

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Sophie Walsh 271-3469

HB 1685, establishing a commission to study aiding the growth of assistive technology businesses and adoption of assistive technologies in New Hampshire.

Hearing Date: March 18, 2026

Time Opened: 11:25 a.m.

Time Closed: 11:32 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Rochefort, Avard, Birdsell, Prentiss and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a commission to study aiding the growth of assistive technology businesses and adoption of assistive technologies in New Hampshire.

Sponsors:

Rep. H. Howard

Who supports the bill: Rep. Heath Howard, Vanessa Blais (NH Council on Developmental Disabilities), Will Walker, Jennifer Favreau, Fiona Geary, Lois Cote, Roger Turgeon, Zoe Dawson, Patrice Rasche, Steve Rasche, and Joseph Conrad.

Who opposes the bill: No one.

Who is neutral on the bill: No one.

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Kevin Avard, Senate District 12

- Senator Avard introduced House Bill 1685 on behalf of Representative Howard.
- This bill is establishing a commission to study aiding the growth of assistive technology businesses and adoption of assistive technologies in New Hampshire.

Vanessa Blais, New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities

- Ms. Blais stated that she is speaking in support of the bill.
- There are many states nationwide that have developed this framework. The disability community believes that exploring options and providing opportunities for people to use technology is a way to solve some of the problems and barriers they face.

- The Assistive Technology Act awards states funding to improve access to assistive technology. In New Hampshire, the implementing organization is called ATinNH. Ms. Blais noted concern about ATinNH not being named as a member of the commission.

Representative Heath Howard, Strafford – District 4

- Representative Howard stated that this bill represents a proactive step towards ensuring that New Hampshire remains a leader in innovation while providing essential support for residents with disabilities.
- Technology-first is a framework that ensures that technology is considered first in discussions of support options to promote meaningful participation, social inclusion, and self-determination for individuals and their families.
- Currently, New Hampshire is one of ten states with zero technology-first benchmarks.
- This bill addresses this gap by creating a diverse commission bringing together all relevant stakeholders, users and parents, state agencies, economic leaders, and non-profit organizations.
- Certain implementation benchmarks will be identified to help residents in need access life-changing technology.
- Measures will be developed to attract assistive technology to the state, fostering economic growth in this sector.
- By passing this legislation, we are building a foundation for future cross-agency collaboration and remote-support initiatives that will improve the quality of life for many granite staters.
- Representative Howard noted that similar legislation has passed in other states.
- Senator Birdsell asked if Representative Howard would be okay with adding ATinNH to the proposed commission's membership, and Representative Howard confirmed.