Please move forward H. 136 / S. 154, “An Act Relating to Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing.”

My name is Jon Bouton.  I live in Hartford near White River Junction.

My wife, Judi Simon-Bouton was, among other things, a guiding parent, a master elementary school teacher and reading specialist, lifelong learner, lover of performances, lover of color, artist, and friend. She was loved by many. To celebrate her life, her friends filled the UU church in Woodstock with colorful quilts she created and colorful clothing and music. She would have loved it.

Complications of “dementia, probably Alzheimer’s” ended her life 2-1/2 years ago. I was her caregiver for several years as this horrible disease took away her enthusiasm and confidence, She lost her ability to cook and quilt. This outgoing woman grew afraid to leave the house. She had a seizure one morning after I brushed her teeth, fell back and mangled several vertibrae. In the hospital, she retained her cheerful repartee but didn’t know nor remember where she was. She went downhill and died in a skilled nursing facility / nursing home less than three months later.

When she was diagnosed with early onset dementia, probably Alzheimer’s, in 2020, the treatment was basically advice to live the best life you have left and get your affairs in order. Oh, and here are some resources to help you understand what’s coming, help you cope and medicines to control depression, anxiety and help you feel sharper.

So much has changed in the past 3 years.
In 2023 and ’24, the FDA approved two drugs that can slow Alzheimer’s. These are for people in the earliest stages of this dementia.
Less than a year ago, the FDA approved a blood test that detects Alzheimer’s. While Alzheimer’s has typically been confirmed with PET brain scans, blood samples can be taken nearly anywhere and shipped off for analysis. This is significant in Vermont where many residents need to travel hours to get to a hospital with the expensive equipment and neurology expertise to take and interpret PET scans.

Six years ago, I would have had a hard time deciding I wanted to find out if I had Alzheimer’s. What was the point? Now, with both a way to diagnose Alzheimer’s early on and treatments to slow the disease, I definitely would want to know.

Health insurance should cover testing for biomarkers, not just for Alzheimer’s but also for cancers and other diseases that can be treated to improve quality of life. Please pass this bill which will ensure approved biomarker testing is covered by health insurance and Medicaid.