

Chairman Landis, Vice Chairwoman Hagan, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 518.

Multiple Sclerosis affects nearly 2.5 million people worldwide. In the United States alone, there are on average 200 new cases a week. In case you don't know MS is a disease that can affect your everyday life with many symptoms. Some of the most notable symptoms are fatigue, muscle weakness/spasms, problems with coordination, and in extreme cases trouble walking which could lead to the use of wheelchairs.

By now I am sure you are wondering what this has to do with you. My name is Mike Patterson and I have a great friend in Rob Fowler. I am going to tell the story of Rob and his battle with MS, and what that has meant for his passion of the outdoors. At the end of this letter I hope you will see why a Bill allowing disabled people to hunt off of ATV's would be beneficial.

In 1999 Rob was having problem with his eyes getting blurry while we were playing church league softball. After many tests it was discovered that he had MS and he would need to seek treatment to try and stay ahead of the disease. Rob has always been a confident person and wasn't going to let the disease get him down. While getting treatment he carried on his normal everyday life which included hunting deer or turkeys when they were in season. In the early years of his diagnosis, we were still able to maintain our friendly competitions of who could harvest the biggest buck or turkey. Whether it was climbing 25 feet in a tree or climbing hills all day, this wasn't going to stop him.

All was fairly well, at least from my viewpoint, up until around 2006 or 2007. Rob asked me to help him track a deer that he had shot and without hesitation I obliged. It was then, that I noticed he was using the aid of a cane, and had to kind of swing his legs forward to move around the woods. It was a sad moment to see this but also a proud time to see someone not give up doing something he loves for a disease. From this point on I helped Rob anytime he asked and even had to start field dressing his deer due to his muscle spasms. Of course many that know Rob know that he is usually too proud to ask for help but I wasn't shy and insisted he let me do it.

By 2009 his time hunting from a treestand was over and he would have to hunt out of portable blinds. It was also this year that a great friend, met through hunting, was able to have a benefit to raise about half the money for an Electric hunting vehicle. This vehicle would make it so Rob didn't have to walk so far in the woods. He could simply park the vehicle 50 yards or so from his blind and limp his way to the blind. Yes that may seem a terrible way to put it but that's exactly what he did. This was after all his release from a life sitting at home watching The Price is Right.

His new to him Hunting Vehicle, allowed him to hunt so much more often and gave him additional opportunities that his legs wouldn't allow. We adapted to the new way of his outdoor transportation and he was still very successful with many harvests. Everything was going as good as it could again until December of 2012. It was gun season and Rob wasn't hunting that night because he was sick with the flu. I had talked to him on the phone to tell him my wife and I had just seen the big buck she was after and were excited. I told him he sounded terrible and I was going to let him get some rest. Unbeknown to me shortly after getting off the phone Rob's fever got the best of him and he fell off his chair and could not reach his cellphone. One thing with MS, at least in Rob's case, overheating is not a good thing at all as he loses more function. He laid on the floor for hours before someone finally came

to his aid. A short stay in the hospital occurred and it was then that his disease really started to progress more rapidly.

After 2012 it was evident there would be no more driving a vehicle or going hunting alone for Rob. So that meant his friends would just have to load his hunting vehicle up and go sit with him. So outside of having to tell him to keep his voice down and not scare the deer away, it was a good time of fellowship for us all. Initially we could just assist him in getting on and off of the vehicle. As the years went by that turned into a two man job. There would be times that we couldn't get a second person to help and he wouldn't be able to hunt. He has a ramp built at his house that makes loading him a one man job. The problem with this was, that when we drove up in the woods across the road I couldn't unload him so he could hunt by legal means. So with all that said if a Bill/Law could be passed to allow disabled people to hunt off of their ATV's he would then be able to hunt more often. This would mean more hunting and less Price is Right episodes. Please consider this from the bottom of your heart as there are many hunters who would benefit and be able to enjoy their passion for the outdoors.

Sincerely

Mike Patterson