

February 15, 2017

H.B. 26 Transportation Budget Testimony

Ohio House Finance Committee

Good morning Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, Ranking member Representative Cera and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee. My name is Katie Frederick, I am the Executive Director of The American Council of the Blind of Ohio, a nonprofit organization representing Ohioans who are blind or visually impaired. The American Council of the Blind of Ohio is also a member of the Ohioans for Transportation Equity Coalition, a collaboration of advocacy organizations, agencies and community groups representing Ohio's urban, suburban and rural populations. We are asking for an increase in the transportation budget to bring Ohio's current transportation options into a state of good repair and ensure viable accessible affordable sustainable transportation options for the economic future of Ohio.

As the Executive Director of a statewide nonprofit serving people who are blind or visually impaired, and as a person who is blind, access to accessible, affordable, sustainable transportation impacts me and people I speak to on a daily basis. One of the services The American Council of the Blind of Ohio provides is an information and referral service, offering Ohio resources to individuals and agencies who call our office. Many people call asking about transportation services in the Columbus area and around the state. I have received calls from concerned individuals who are currently employed, but due to cuts in transportation funding, fear job loss due to an inability to commute to and from work. There are individuals who are unable to get or take jobs offered to them due to an inability to get to the jobsite.

Access to transportation affects people's ability to find and maintain employment, get access to healthcare, shop for groceries, and live active productive lives in their communities. According to the 2015 Ohio Department of Transportation, (ODOT), Transit Needs study, Ohio ranks 47 out of 50 in public transportation investment; currently one percent (1%) of funding in the transportation budget goes to funding this vital service. The American Council of the Blind of Ohio and the Ohioans for Transportation Equity Coalition are asking ten percent (10%) of the transportation budget be used to provide accessible affordable, sustainable transit options for all Ohioans.

Ohio was the first state to enact the Achieving a Better Life Experience, (ABLE) Act, helping people with disabilities and their families fund disability-related expenses, and people with disabilities are pleased Ohio was a leader. People with disabilities are not proud to say, however, Ohio ranks 47 out of 50 in public transportation funding. The American Council of the Blind of Ohio and the Ohioans for Transportation Equity Coalition ask for the ten percent funding allocation in the upcoming budget so Ohioans who need access to accessible, affordable sustainable transportation can live the lives they want in the communities they choose. Thank you for your time.

Katie Frederick