

Written Testimony from Pennie Chappell
House Finance, Subcommittee of Health and Human Services
House Bill 49—State Biennium Budget
March 22, 2017

Greetings Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee. My name is Pennie Chappell and I am the mother and legal guardian of Joshua Chappell. Joshua is a 28-year-old man who has Cerebral Palsy and requires a wheelchair for mobility. My testimony today relates to the obstacles preventing full community integration for Joshua and others with limited mobility in Knox County, Ohio.

Many public buildings within Knox County cannot be accessed by people who rely on wheelchairs for their mobility, with or without assistance from others. Restaurants, McDonald's and Wendy's, both have doorways that are too narrow or do not give enough clearance for wheelchair users. Another restaurant, Fiesta Mexicana, has stairs as soon as you open the entry door. Department stores, such as Kohl's, have displays in isle-ways that restrict passage. These may seem like relatively minor issues to you and I; however, when my son is invited to lunch with friends he must consider if he can get into the building and restrooms before he can accept. Community integration is a civil right and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities fully supports, and expects, individuals to be active participants in their community. This cannot happen with this committee's commitment to removing the barriers.

Although I agree with the stipulation of not causing any undue financial hardship for structural changes, other options, such as purchasing portable ramps, are available at significantly lower cost and should be an ADA requirement. Other regulations, such as, 30-inch wide doorways and larger radius space in entries and isles can remove obstacles without major expense to business owners.

I sincerely thank the committee for allowing my testimony. I am confident that this committee can and will make modifications to current regulations regarding width of doorways and radius of entry-ways so that every citizen can be a member of their community to their fullest potential. Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any questions or provide any more details concerning my testimony.

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