

HB787

Interested Party Testimony

Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee

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Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide Interested Party Testimony on HB787. My name is Jeremy Morris and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council, a State affiliated Council that promotes independence and inclusion for individuals with significant disabilities across the State of Ohio.

As part of our work, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss legislation that impacts the community of persons with disabilities in Ohio and to be a resource to the General Assembly as they consider this and other similar legislation.

HB787, if enacted, will make several changes to current state laws that will impact the overall access to the community for individuals with disabilities.

As you know, the changes proposed to ORC 4511.69 through this legislation make changes to accessible parking. Of all the changes, we wanted to highlight a few that have a potential, positive, and substantial impact to the disability community.

Accessible parking must be kept obstruction free – Any obstructions surrounding accessible parking can create additional barriers to exiting and entry of a vehicle for an individual with a mobility disability. The addition of this language will help to ensure that when snow removal is taking place, accessible parking and the required access aisle between parking spaces will not be obstructed.

Parking in access aisle – The access aisle is an important component of an accessible parking spot. If an individual's vehicle has a lift or ramp, there must be space to allow for this mechanism to be utilized. In situations where people park in the lined access aisle, it prevents an individual from entering or exiting his or her vehicle. Even in situations without a modified vehicle, individuals using any type of mobility device may need the extra space to enter and exit their vehicle. This is not just an inconvenience, it has a severe detrimental effect on a person's ability to travel (e.g. to work, to school, to a medical appointment, to a meeting of the Ohio House Transportation Committee.)

Changes to enforcement – Allowing law enforcement to enforce existing laws is an important component of this legislation. Local law enforcement is stretched very thin. Having to wait to observe the individual driver in order to write a citation severely limits

the likelihood of individuals being cited for breaking the law. Other violations of state law do not have this limitation. A vehicle clearly in violation of the law must be allowed to be ticketed immediately. This enforcement will have the effect of limiting future infractions.

Blocking curb cuts –An accessible parking spot without the additional access to enter the place of public accommodation is useless. If the curb cut is obstructed, the individual with a mobility impairment is unable to access the goods or services sought.

Volunteer enforcement – Trained volunteers can assist law enforcement in the effort to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to their community. Individuals with disabilities can become part of these volunteer efforts, since they are the real experts in understanding the needs for accessible parking.

Creating opportunity for adaptive recreation – Having funds raised by the fines for violation of the civil rights of persons with disabilities going back to the disability community in the form of increased adaptive recreation programs is a benefit that will have a positive statewide impact, as well as providing poetic justice to violators of the law who can walk, but choose not to. While some programs and adaptive sports exist across the state, more opportunities, especially for youth with disabilities, will have long lasting positive impacts.

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, the disability community has been working to resolve issues in their community that have potential to limit someone's full access and participation. Issues that to others are minor ("its just parking"), create substantial, and sometimes insurmountable, barriers to a person's ability to independently shop, work, and participate in their community.

Thank you for reviewing this submission of Interested Party testimony, my contact information is below if you have any additional questions after the hearing,

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