



Adult Advocacy
Centers

Katherine Yoder, MS, CFI
Executive Director, Adult Advocacy Centers
House Bill 162
Interested Party Testimony
March 23, 2021

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chairwoman Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in regard to HB 162, which seeks to remove and replace language derogatory to people with disabilities in Ohio's state statutes. I represent the Adult Advocacy Centers, a first-of-its-kind victim services organization that works specifically with people with disabilities. As such, our work at the AACs bridges the worlds of law and disability, and we see first-hand the ways our systems can work to either uplift or dehumanize the people we serve.

The disability community has faced discrimination in our society for generations. Language like "idiot," "deaf and dumb," "mentally retarded," "lunatics," "mental defective," "crippled child/children," "derangement" and "handicapped" uphold stereotypes, historical trauma and oppression. While some may consider these "just words," we know that words have power. Seeing degrading language enshrined into Ohio's laws is a constant and painful reminder to those in the disability community that they are still seen as less than equal citizens.

I would also like to take this opportunity to note the importance of gathering a wide variety of voices at the table as this process moves forward, including agencies and people with disabilities themselves. Indeed, people with disabilities being included will ensure that the revised language meets its goal of using words that represent various communities versus words rooted in historical trauma.

Thank you again for allowing me to contribute my testimony. I welcome the opportunity to work with you as this effort moves forward.

Kind Regards,

Katherine Yoder, MS, CFI

