



April 4, 2022

Testimony on H.B. 408

House Criminal Justice Committee

Dear Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Esteemed Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer this testimony on House Bill 408!

My name is Brian Thomas and I am the President/CEO of United Disability Services. We are based in Akron and serve people in a five-county area). We are a not-for-profit human services agency that provides supports for more than 600 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). As part of our array of services, with a fleet of 45 transit buses and vans, we offer transportation services that allow Ohioans with I/DD to get to places like work, and volunteer and recreational opportunities. We additionally provide non-emergency medical transportation to families supported by Summit County Job & Family Services, transporting approximately 40 patients each day.

In two occurrences during January 2020, eighteen catalytic converters were stolen from our vehicles. The replacement cost was \$17,000, a majority of which was covered by insurance. However, in the ensuing months, we put additional security measures in place, at a total cost exceeding \$40,000. More than \$20,000 of revenue was also lost due to our inability to transport some individuals for several days.

In spring 2021, the security measures were compromised and three more catalytic converters were stolen. As an additional deterrent, we installed “cat cage” devices, with metal roping surrounding the converters and welded to the bus frames. In subsequent events, perpetrators did cut through fences and left evidence (broken saw blades) of failed attempts to cut through the “cat cages.” However, we recently viewed videos of a new type of electric saw being used to successfully cut through those devices.

The financial impact of the converter thefts was a severe strain on the finances of this nonprofit agency. Passage of H.B. 408 may deter the theft of catalytic converters, and may protect organizations like United Disability Services from such operational and financial setbacks in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian W. Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian W. Thomas
President/CEO
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