

Written Testimony of Kathryn Scheid  
for H.B. 281  
Mental Health and Disability Terminology Act  
February 9, 2022

Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony for House Bill 281 that would replace various statutory terms related to people with disabilities or mental illness.

The words we use matter. Words shape behavior and thought, allowing us to form meaning and connection with others. But words can also label, dehumanize, and create barriers for people in the disability community who are already marginalized from society.

My name is Kathryn Scheid and as a community member of the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio and parent of a child with an intellectual disability, I am asking for your support of House Bill 281 which will update the derogatory and demeaning terms from statute that are used to describe people with disabilities and mental conditions.

People— all people—deserve language that is respectful and describes their identity with dignity. Using people-first, inclusive language allows us to see people for who they are, rather than assign labels and further isolate them from society. We have the power to dispel negative attitudes and stereotypes through the words that we use, to create a more inclusive world. I'm here today asking for your support of House Bill 281 in the name of my daughter Eleanor, for myself, and for all Ohioans. The words we use matter. Thank you.