

Ohio House of Representatives
House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Finance Subcommittee Members,

My name is Kim and I am a mom to a 10 year old with multiple disabilities. My son is a happy, sweet boy who loves music and going to school. He is a wheelchair user and is nonverbal. Because of his medical diagnoses, he needs to use diapers.

When we are away from home it is very difficult to care for his restroom needs, due to a lack of safe, private and dignified places to change him. Baby changing tables only serve people up to 40 pounds, which most people outgrow around age 3. They do not serve the large portion of our population that are not able to use a traditional restroom due to developmental disabilities or medical conditions.

It is extremely frustrating to be out in public with my child and not have a place to care for him. I avoid getting us into situations where he would have to stay soiled for a long time until we could make our way home to change him. Often times I do not take him to do all the fun things he would like to do, because I want to avoid the indignities he would suffer by being changed somewhere inappropriate, without privacy. For example, I have changed him in the trunk of our minivan in crowded parking lots, on picnic blankets in the grass at the park, and on dirty restroom floors. Not having access to an accommodating, accessible and inclusive restroom is a major barrier to our son participating in society.

Our state misses out on all the talents and contributions of these individuals because they are mostly staying at home, not included, as they are not able to use the restroom while in public. Imagine if our state did not offer you any restrooms that you could use. How would this limit your life? You could not go to work and stay for more than an hour. You could not go shopping, or spend the day out and about doing errands. You could not have a long meal at a restaurant. If you tried to do these things you would end up soiled with nowhere to take care of yourself. You would end up staying at home and would become isolated. According to the National Institute on Aging, the health risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

In Ohio, 11% of adults have a cognitive condition, 7% have impaired mobility, and 3% require total care from caregivers. Among the 2.8 million Ohio residents age 60 or older, 2 in 5 adults experience one or more disabilities. Having a disability is something that any of us could experience at any time through illness or injury.

Providing funds in the Ohio budget to support more inclusive and accessible restrooms with universal/adult size changing tables will enrich our communities. It will allow people who previously spent their lives isolated to join in their community.

I support Governor DeWine's budget as proposed to fund the Department of Developmental Disabilities, for not only badly-needed Direct Service Providers, but also for funds to install adult size changing tables. This will begin to bring our public restrooms into alignment with our belief that everyone in our society matters.

Sincerely,
Kim Boulter
Lewis Center, Ohio
Changing Spaces Ohio
(614) 600-0973





Nationwide Children's hospital, near
Outpatient center elevators

Having to lay individuals with disabilities onto restroom floors to change them is wrong. They deserve better.

