

House Bill 32

Sponsor Testimony

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 32.

It is with deep pride and conviction that Representative Cockley and I stand before you today to introduce legislation that would designate July as *Disability Pride Month* in the state of Ohio—a time to honor the achievements, history, and humanity of Ohioans with disabilities, while calling on each of us to help remove the barriers that still stand in their way.

This bill is simple in language—but powerful in purpose. It seeks to affirm what should already be true: that Ohio is a state where everyone belongs. That the contributions, resilience, and humanity of Ohioans with disabilities deserve to be honored, uplifted, and seen.

Every July, we commemorate the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act—a groundbreaking civil rights law that fundamentally reshaped our nation’s understanding of access and dignity. The ADA tore down walls, opened doors, and reminded us that inclusion is not charity—it is justice. But for all the progress we’ve made, we know the work is far from finished.

Today in Ohio, far too many of our neighbors with disabilities still face unnecessary and unjust obstacles to full participation in public life. They’re told “no” when they apply for jobs. They face physical barriers to buildings, services, and transit. And too often, their talents and voices are ignored, underestimated, or excluded entirely.

And yet, in every corner of our state—from rural towns to bustling cities—Ohioans with disabilities are showing up. They are some of the hardest-working people in our communities. They’re bagging our groceries, caring for our elders, teaching in our schools, leading advocacy movements, and innovating in workplaces across the state. They’re doing this not because the path is easy—but because their spirit is unshakable. Their resilience is unmatched.

Disability Pride Month is not just symbolic. It is a declaration—a declaration that we see you, we honor you, and we are committed to building a state where your full humanity is not only recognized—but celebrated.

It is a time for Ohio to recognize that disability is not something to be pitied or hidden, but

embraced as part of the rich diversity that makes our communities stronger. It is a time to elevate the voices of people who have too often been silenced or spoken for. And it is a time to commit—not just with words, but with action—to building an Ohio where disability is not seen as a limitation, but as a vital part of the human experience.

By officially designating July as Disability Pride Month, we send a clear message:

That Ohio is a state where everyone belongs.

That dignity is not conditional.

That every Ohioan—regardless of ability—deserves the chance to live with freedom, independence, and purpose.

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of this committee—thank you for your time, your service, and your thoughtful consideration of this bill.

I'll now pass it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Cockley.