

Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee  
H.B. 32  
Proponent Testimony  
April 9, 2025

Representatives Jarrells and Cockley, and co-sponsors of this bill, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on H.B. 32.

My name is Maria Matzik, and I am the host of the Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee. The Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee was created in response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities. The focus of the committee is to create an active space for advocates to work together to develop and create community awareness and change in the communities that we work, live, and participate in. The goal of this committee is to establish relationships with local and state officials as well as to partner with community organizations around disability related issues.

Breaking Silences is testifying today to express strong support for H. B. 32, which proposes designating the month of July as "Disabilities Month." This legislation presents an important opportunity to honor the contributions of individuals with disabilities and to further the ongoing movement toward equality and inclusion in all aspects of life.

The disability rights movement has been a powerful force for social change, advocating for access, representation, and rights for people with disabilities. It is a movement rooted in the belief that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, deserve the same opportunities to fully participate in society. This fight for equality has empowered countless people with disabilities to stand up and demand not only basic human rights but also the recognition of their unique talents, skills, and perspectives.

Disability is a facet of identity that intersects race, culture, and community in profound ways. Across the globe and within the diverse communities of Ohio, people with disabilities face both shared and unique challenges based on cultural, racial, and economic factors. These intersections highlight the need for a broader, more inclusive conversation about disability rights, one that transcends traditional boundaries and addresses the unique experiences of marginalized groups. For example, people with disabilities from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities often face compounded barriers, both physical and societal, that prevent them from accessing the same opportunities and protections afforded to others. It is crucial that we recognize the ways in which disability intersects with these experiences to ensure that our efforts toward inclusion are truly equitable.

In light of the ongoing hostile political climate, it is more important than ever to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the disability community, along with other marginalized groups, whose contributions are often overlooked or diminished. The resilience and determination of individuals with disabilities have driven vital change, yet our efforts continue to

face significant challenges. Acknowledging the achievements is not only a matter of justice, but a crucial step toward ensuring that progress does not reverse. As policies become more exclusionary and discriminatory, we must remain committed to amplifying the voices of those who have long been at the forefront of advocating for equity, inclusion, and rights for all. The fight for recognition and respect of people with disabilities is inextricably linked to the broader struggle for equality and human dignity, making it essential that we uphold and celebrate our achievements, even in the face of adversity.

As we acknowledge the importance of these contributions, it is essential that we continue to push forward. While progress has been made, the disability community still faces challenges, including disparities in health care, education, employment, and access to services. By officially recognizing the month of July as "Celebrating Disabilities Month," we send a powerful message that we are committed to continuing the fight for full inclusion and equality. This designation will provide a platform to celebrate the achievements of individuals with disabilities, and all marginalized groups, while also highlighting the ongoing need for systemic change.

In closing, I strongly support Section 5.2322 of the Revised Code to read as:

**The month of July is designated as "Celebrating Disabilities Month."**

This month will serve as a reminder that the disability community continues to stand, fight, and roll in solidarity for all marginalized individuals and communities. It is a call for equal recognition and opportunities, and it is an invitation for all of us to take part in building a society where everyone, regardless of ability, is valued and included.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We look forward to working together to ensure that the voices of individuals with disabilities are heard and their contributions celebrated.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria A. Matzik (She / Her)  
Host of the Breaking Silences Advocacy Committee  
[mariammatzik@gmail.com](mailto:mariammatzik@gmail.com)  
(937) 623-9351