

April 8, 2025

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

I appreciate this opportunity to offer a testimony on behalf of House Bill 32. Designating July as Celebrating Disabilities Month in Ohio offers a platform and an opportunity to share with the rest of the state the impact that the Americans with Disabilities Act has had on our community. While we have made great strides to remove barriers, we are still on the ground level and have so far to go. Recently Anita Cameron, a disability civil rights activist was quoted as saying, "Civil rights aren't given, you have to fight to get them, and you have to fight to keep them." I feel very strongly that we are in our "keep them" era. We cannot be content or complacent with what we were given, when so many Ohioans with disabilities are still fighting for basic rights that we take for granted every day. Awareness and recognition, bringing deficits to light, whether it be one month or all year, is imperative to the movement and to keep diversity and inclusion alive for our community.

In today's political climate more than ever, it is important that we are still moving forward and continuing to advocate and acknowledge the need for celebration and recognition of this community. To be a voice and stand in solidarity with those who maybe haven't always felt like they have had a voice, or a seat at the table. Until we are all viewed as equal, until there is true equity and we all can change our mindset and become 100% adaptable and accessible, we need to advocate for awareness and education. What better way to honor this community and their efforts than to dedicate a month to their successes and their diligence.

This is a small gesture, but a huge statement. Ohio, we need to send the message that we are continuing to stand for and beside the community of people with disabilities.

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