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To the State of Ohio:

After October 18, 2004, my life turned upside down. I was stuck, isolated, and relegated to being immobile at home and relying on the mercy of neighbors, friends, and co-workers who had vehicles to help me. You see, my husband died on that date because of lingering injuries from service in Vietnam. I am partially paralyzed and use a wheelchair due to a spinal cord injury. My husband was my caregiver and transporter. Calling around to get rides to work, stores, and doctors was grievous, paying for gas, or paying \$20 one-way for a taxi (who could afford that?) **until**, several years later, my life was literally saved by **Athens on Demand!**

I was one of the first, if not the first, riders to use it and rode it anywhere from six to 16 times a week, before COVID, to travel to and from work, to appointments, to shop, to go out to eat, to get to Go Bus for travel to the airport in Columbus, to attend meetings and events, or just to visit a friend. The service is impeccable. Those who schedule rides are efficient and accommodating. The drivers are courteous and go out of their way to keep us safe and to make us comfortable. And, the price is right!

I am not on a bus route. Imagine yourself or your family without the ability to maintain their job or be independent because transportation upon which they critically rely has lost its funding. I urge you to think about those of us who will be left abandoned if \$90 million is cut. This is imperative. Life and death. It's having the capability to get to work for many or unemployment. It's remaining an integral and present part of the community.

Thank you for not cutting funding from HAPCAP. Citizens of Southeast Ohio would be devastated if cut – particularly those of us who live with disabilities. It's our lifeline.

Sincerely,
Dr. Carolyn Bailey Lewis

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