



Written Testimony Senate Transportation Committee
House Bill 74, Ohio Transportation Budget
Nathan D Turner, President Self Advocates Lucas Toledo (SALUTE)
March 17, 2021

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reinke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Self Advocates Lucas Toledo SALUTE and the more than 3500 individuals served with developmental disabilities in Lucas County.

My name is Nathan Turner from Springfield Township in Holland Ohio. I have the pleasure of serving as president of SALUTE an advocacy organization for individuals with disabilities in Lucas County, Ohio. I am also the first individual receiving services to sit on the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board of Directors. At the heart of our advocacy is promoting inclusion of people with disabilities and a strong public transportation system is essential to this goal. We are collaborating with The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, Community Advocates for Transportation Rights, MoveOhio and other stakeholder groups to promote investment of at least \$150 million in statewide funding for transportation. This is recommended by the Ohio Department of Transportation's 2015 Transit Needs Study. We are also supporting an amendment from the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority to provide vital transportation services to unserved and underserved populations, especially in my community.

The limited funding for our current transportation system significantly decreases the likelihood the people with disabilities enjoy aspects of life taken for granted by those not utilizing public transit. Many people with disabilities and seniors are unable to drive and fully reliant on fixed or accessible transportation options for employment, medical care, recreation or connecting with family and friends.

Limited transportation is a significant barrier to accessing needed medical care. Delaying needed medical care decreases quality of life and increases long-term medical expenses when so many are dependent on public benefits or fixed income. Equitably funding regional transportation is an opportunity for Toledo and Ohio to exercise leadership in meeting the needs of an aging population with significant increases in residence with disabilities and build on its legacy of accessibility among people with disabilities.

Economically, people with disabilities are widely recognized some of the most reliable employees with unique skills and perspectives. Additional local transportation routes would generate a broader talent pool for businesses, restaurants and retail shops. Customers with disabilities and their families are incredibly loyal and will regularly patronize firms in communities with a commitment to accessibility. Many local shopping centers would be in a



strong position to welcome new customers who are not currently able to access this area on the existing routes.

Personally, I enjoy patronizing many of the different businesses as well as meeting my friends, but limited transportation options make it difficult to visit many areas in Lucas County very often.

Toledo is the only major metropolitan area in the state lacking a countywide public transportation infrastructure. Representatives from TARTA have sought unanimous approval from all seven member communities to shift the financing model to a more stable sales tax mechanism. Unfortunately, each initiative has been thwarted by opinions from a dissenting community. A unified response from local and state governments would send a clear message that equitable transportation is critical to long-term socioeconomic growth after the global pandemic.

A process respecting a majority opinion rather than requiring unanimous consent is more democratic and would sufficiently allow the public to debate and support more equitable funding for transportation. Please ensure that the amendment to House Bill 74 sponsored by TARTA is included in the final bill. We also need to ensure that our transit systems are fully funded and modernized to drive economic growth in the future by authorizing \$150 million of annual funding as recommended by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

From our experiences with advocacy, we understand great cities have strong transportation systems. We believe this is an important step towards making the Toledo region into a modern and inclusive urban center and welcome the opportunity to connect with this committee and discuss more specifics. Please feel free to contact me at natedturner@gmail.com to have a more detailed conversation. I look forward to hearing from you. I sincerely appreciate your membership for listening to our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan D. Turner".

Nathan D Turner

President Self Advocates Lucas Toledo (SALUTE)