

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 31.

I was injured in a motorcycle accident 15 years ago which left me with a Spinal Cord Injury and partial paralysis. I was fortunate to make a good recovery to I can walk a little with difficulty and suffer from chronic neuropathic pain, for which there is currently no relief.

I appreciate the provision of handicapped parking places, and the electric scooters provided by large stores. I usually do not have a problem finding a handicapped parking spot at large stores where there are multiple handicapped spaces.

However I believe that handicapped placards are too freely issued and the current rules often abused.

The current rules require the placard holder to have difficulty walking; the holder should have difficulty walking 200 feet without resting, or a number of other criteria. If the requirements were truly being met, ALL those parked in handicapped spots, who do not use wheelchairs would need to use the electric scooters provided; this is clearly not the case.

Tightening up the issuance of placards is an essential step. Personally I would like to see the holder's photo on the placard, since one of the common types of abuse is use of the placard by an able bodied spouse. I know phot ID is the practice in South Carolina.

In additional to my personal experience I coordinate a support group for other SCI patients in mid Ohio and I have heard many times that wheelchair users have difficulty exiting or reentering their vehicles because of obstruction of the hatched area specifically provided to help van users.

I recently lobbied the legislature to increase funding for SCI Research. We were fortunate to find a champion in then Senator, now Chancellor Randy Gardner which resulted in \$3M allocated in the budget which is now funding 5 research projects in the state. During our campaign I was impressed by the level of bipartisan support for the disabled.

I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation. Thank you all for your time and I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

Peter Nowell