16, January 2020

Ohio House Health committee:

Interested Party Testimony

Regarding HB214

 Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member West and distinguished committee members, my name is Jordy D. Stringer. Presently I serve as the executive Director at the Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living (SOCIL); and I also happened to be blind.

 SOCIL was established locally in 2003 by individuals with disabilities. It is a non-profit consumer-controlled organization (at least 51% of board and staff members have a disability) that provides an array of services to individuals of any age, with any disability residing in Fairfield and Hocking Counties.

 We offer five core services:

• Information and referral;

• Independent living skills training;

• Individual and systems advocacy;

• Peer counseling;

• Community transition (from a nursing facility to the community and also for youth exiting secondary education)

 Additional services are based on individual and community needs. We assist individuals with disabilities to access resources and services such as accessible housing and transportation, employment, personal care assistance, socialization and recreation, public benefits, affordable health care and medical supports, home modifications and ramps, and diversion and prevention services to keep individuals from entering into an institutional living situation.

 To this end, over half a million blind, low-vision, and print-disabled Ohioans are unable to read FDA-mandated prescription labels and prescription information sheets. The data provided by pharmacists at the window does not give the access to information needed at home by low-vision and print disabled consumers to manage their medications safely and independently as non-print disabled people do by reading their prescription label information when they are in doubt. It is critical that all of our consumers have access to the dosage, instructions, side-effects, contra-indications, and emergency/refill phone numbers provided by the legal label. As a person who is totally blind I very well know the possible harm that could come from me taking the wrong dose or incorrect combination of medications. Making it possible for Ohioans like myself to independently access prescription labels would reduce the detrimental health consequences of medication errors and improve the safety and medication adherence of those with cognitive, vision loss and print disabilities.

 Several options are available to provide accessible prescription labels. Moreover, pharmacies are free to choose and develop any option that complies with the law. The US Access Board best practices were specifically designed to assist pharmacies in developing solutions to this critical accessibility issue. The ADA specifically states that consumers can specify what their preferred format (audible, large print, or Braille) of accommodation is to assist the pharmacist in determining the most effective means of communicating the required information.

 Many individuals served by our agency return to work, go back to school, obtain employment for the first time, secure affordable housing, participate in civic activities, and learn the skills necessary to lead safe independent and fulfilling lives in the community.

 Thank you for the opportunity to educate you on the services that we offer here at SOCIL and how issues like this effect the everyday lives of your constituents.

Sincerely, Jordy D. Stringer

Executive Director, Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living

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