Chairman Baldridge, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheechy, and members of the House Transportation Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 31.

When I was born, in 1982, my parents were told by the doctors that having a child with Spina Bifida was an undue hardship on them, that I would never have any quality of life and they should consider institutionalizing me. I have spent the last 37 years of my life proving them wrong.

I have a successful, twenty-year career with the Akron Area YMCA, own my own home, volunteer in my community, have wonderful relationships with friends and family, served on leadership boards for non-profits, and own and drive my own vehicle.

One of the biggest struggles that faces the disabled community is transportation. It can be the difference between independence and being forced to rely on others for basic needs. Over the years I have encountered numerous instances of parking abuse, invalid placards, lack of loading and unloading space and a general lack of concern for those that depend on accessible parking.

On my way home from work one night, I stopped at the local grocery store to pick up a few items. When I arrived at the store all of the handicapped parking spaces were full, a common occurrence. I parked further down in the lot and proceeded towards the store. As I was passing by the parking spots a car started to back out, nearly striking me. I was able to yell and hit the trunk of the vehicle to alert the driver that I was there. My wheelchair sits lower than eye level. The driver just didn't see me. Had accessible parking been available the distance I had to travel would have been reduced, creating a safer experience for me.

This is just one of thousands of stories that can be told by members of the disabled community. Abuse of handicapped parking laws stands at an all time high. Our current laws do not do enough to protect us. I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin Murphy