



701 S. Main St. Akron, OH 44311

April 14, 2023

**Testimony on H.B. 110
House Criminal Justice Committee**

Dear Chairwoman Abrams and Esteemed Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to offer this testimony on House Bill 110.

My name is Brian Thomas and I am the President/CEO of United Disability Services. UDS is based in Akron and we serve people in a five-county area. We are a not-for-profit human services agency that provides supports for more than 600 Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). As part of our array of services, with a fleet of 43 transit buses and vans, we offer transportation that allows Ohioans with disabilities to get to places like work, and volunteer and recreational opportunities. We also provide non-emergency medical transportation to families who are supported by Summit County Job & Family Services, transporting approximately 40 patients to appointments each day.

In two occurrences during January 2020, eighteen catalytic converters were stolen from our vehicles. In addition to paying \$4500 in deductibles for replacement parts, we put new security measures in place, at a total cost exceeding \$50,000. More than \$20,000 of revenue was lost due to our inability to transport some individuals for several days.

In spring 2021, the new security measures were compromised and three more catalytic converters were stolen. As an additional deterrent, we installed “cat cage” devices, with metal roping surrounding the converters and welded to the bus frames. The cost for those devices totaled \$4300, and fortunately we have a full-time mechanic, saving us the installation cost.

In 2022, perpetrators again cut through fences and left broken saw blades as evidence of failed attempts to cut through the “cat cages.” Recently we viewed videos of a new type of electric saw being used to successfully cut through those devices.

The financial impact of the converter thefts was a severe strain on the finances of this nonprofit agency. Passage of H.B. 110 may deter the theft of catalytic converters, protecting organizations like United Disability Services from such operational and financial setbacks in the future.

Sincerely,

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