

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide Proponent Testimony on HB391

Handicapped accessible parking has been an issue for my family, specifically my physically disabled 22-year-old daughter, for many years. My daughter, Kelly, does not drive independently yet, so my husband and I are her primary drivers. The simple task of going to the grocery store can be a maddening experience, particularly now that it is wintertime and we live in Northeast Ohio. Plow drivers and store owners often push the snow into accessible parking spots, making it very difficult to remove the wheelchair and person from the car. I have lived in NEO most of my life, and I know snowstorms can be difficult. However, to add insult to injury, people who are not handicapped (and have a family members placard in their windshield) take the spots designated for ADA parking. Honestly, it doesn't matter what time of the year it is, this type of violation occurs EVERYDAY at my local Giant Eagle grocery store. The over issuance of handicapped placards is ridiculous. I believe the numbers are: 7% of Ohioans are considered legally handicapped but the issuance rate is north of 25%?!?!? These numbers are not congruent to the needs of our handicapped community; nor are the fines. If the handicapped person is not exiting the car, they should not park in the ADA space. If you are driving grandmother's car (with a placard) and you are an able-bodied person, you do not park in an ADA space. All of these scenarios should be finable however, the police cannot keep up with such violations. I see a separate community body, who can assist with these types of violations be helpful in controlling compliance. This legislation is far too important to be ignored or stuck in community because consensus cannot be achieved. We look to you Chairwoman Kunze, and your committee to be the leaders in Ohio, who do the right thing for the handicapped population and take into consideration HB 31 and its legislative importance to our family and handicapped community. Kelly and I have given testimony in front of this committee before, and I am sorry we cannot be with you again today because we feel VERY STRONGLY about this very important piece of legislation.

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.

Sincerely,

Anne M Harmody - parent

Mark R Harmody - parent

Kelly A Harmody – adult daughter with Spina Bifida

Solon, OH