

To the Chair and Vice Chair of the Education, Environment, and Energy Committee and members of the Committee.

My name is Ed Knight. I live in Frederick, MD. I am the husband of Steven Frank, who is DeafBlind. We are both retirees living in Independent Living in a retirement community, Homewood at Frederick. I am sighted. We have been together for 41 years, and he went blind more than 20 years ago.

I am here in support of SB 185; the Co-Navigation bill. This bill is important because I am the person who ordinarily provides Co-Navigator services for Steven, and what happens if something happens to me, who will provide those services for him?

By Co-Navigator services, I mean driving him to shopping and appointments, guiding him, and doing light interpreting from ASL to English and English to tactile ASL. Although I am hearing, a Deaf person could provide Co-Navigator services just as well or better than I do.

A Co-Navigator program with the state will enable Steven to continue to remain in Independent Living if I enter the hospital, become disabled, develop dementia, or die. Even if he moved to Assisted Living, he would still need Co-Navigator services to live a full life.

Passing this bill will also improve my life by helping me avoid burn out.

We also have many friends in the DeafBlind community, and I also have concern for them and for their families.

A Co-Navigator Services program would have the added benefit of providing employment opportunities for the Deaf community as ASL users are the natural pool of talent for such a program.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in writing. I ask for a favorable report on SB 185.

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