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Dear Maryland Legislators:

It is with great pleasure that the Prince George's County NAACP come before you in support of SB-1096-Licenses, Identification Cards, and Moped Operator's Permits - Identification of Nonapparent Disability. Generally speaking, a differently-abled person is someone who, due to a long-term impairment in physical, hearing, seeing, cognitive, mental, or emotional abilities, has substantial limitations in one or more major life activities. Disability, however, occurs on a continuum and there is no clearly defined line between those who have a physical disability and an invisible disability. Because of this, there are times when a lay person, unfamiliar with an invisible differently-able person's distinctive behavior, may make a decision to the detriment of the invisible differently-abled party. As a civil rights organization it is our mission to help promote, safeguard, and protect the civil and constitutional rights of all people.

The purpose of this bill is to secure additional support from the legislative body in order to safeguard differently-abled citizens of Maryland. Adding a simple logo to an official document is a negligible expense for the State. In our opinion, including a volunteer symbol on a Maryland driver's license is an optional act that does not contribute to discrimination. On the other hand, our stance is that companies or businesses that would use this symbol to discriminate by raising prices or excluding individuals from activities or events is unacceptable and unlawful. Adding a symbol to one's driver's license guarantees its authenticity.

Finally, it is estimated that between 40-57 million people in the United States have disabilities, accounting for approximately 13-20 percent of the population. I believe making a small change to help keep some of our differently-abled citizens safe and protected is what our government is all about.

Respectfully Submitted for the Children,

Linda Thornton Thomas, President