

Written Testimony

HB10/SB44- Support

1/27/20

I am a life-long resident of the great state of Maryland. I currently reside in Frederick county. This is where my husband and I have chosen to raise our family of four children.

I am writing you as the mother of a young man diagnosed with severe disabilities. I would like to share with you our experience with public restrooms. I am in support of Senate Bill 44/HB10. Accessible public changing areas are very much needed.

My son, Andrew was born with bleeds in his brain which has led to his diagnosis of cerebral palsy (he uses a wheelchair) daily seizures, low vision and he is non-verbal. My 20 year old son looks like a young man, but can only function at about the level of a year old child. Despite all of these medical issues, my son is a sweet, easy going boy who loves Tim McGraw music, and traveling with his family.

As a younger, smaller child; my son's diaper could be changed on the back seat of our mini-van, or the trunk, or a quiet corner in an airport, or down a quiet hallway at a museum. We prepared for these instances as most parents do with small children, carrying a typical diaper bag. Years ago, a diaper change required only one parent. With respect to toileting/diaper changes your child with disabilities is smaller, life is easier, as your child grows transferring, moving, diaper changing your child becomes quite difficult. My 20 year-old son now weighs 165 lbs and is 5'6" tall. He's a big guy, who cannot assist whatsoever when it comes to transferring or toileting.

It takes 2 adults to lift Andrew now. Where we once could find a quiet hallway to change our son, we can no longer do this. He's a big guy! We frequently attend sporting events. We bring our son to the first aid station to be changed. No emergency; just need a private place. We travel quite a bit. We have a very large accessible van which we had purchased in hopes to have the option to change him inside. That is not possible. He's too big! On road trips, we change our son at an outdoor rest stop on the grass, in front of the public, where pets use the same area to do their business. We carry a mattress pad, a tent or sheet and use our 3 daughters as "blockers" so that he has some sort of dignity or privacy. It's the best system we have found. We have faced obstacles with our current system. Rain, snow, cold, wind, bugs (red ants, mosquitos, etc), mud, horrible smells, bystander stares, police checks, etc. We have traveled throughout the US by van. Very rarely have we found a large enough bath room to accommodate 3 people, a wheelchair, a changing table to change our son in a dignified manner.

I have faced many challenges throughout these 20 years in caring for my son. My son has faced the greatest of challenges. He lives his life dependent on others for every single thing. I try to give him the best most meaningful life I can. Providing my son the most basic things, shouldn't be an issue. He deserves to use a public rest room as we all do in a dignified way.

Thank you for listening to our story and our experiences when it comes to this aspect of his caregiving. Accessible restrooms, changing areas are long overdue. I can be reached at 240-506-7846 if you have any further questions.

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