

January 26, 2021

Good morning Chair, Vice Chair, and all members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am writing you today as a board member of a local non-profit called Dreams For Kids DC (DFKDC) to urge you to vote favorably for the SB0061 bill for adult changing facilities in public buildings.

Our non-profit puts on special events for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Maryland, DC, and Virginia areas. These events allow children to interact with their peers, meet their heroes when we partner with local sports teams, and learn valuable skills that help them in everyday life, such as cooking. Before COVID, all our clinics were in-person, which provided invaluable engagement opportunities for our kids and their families. While we have continued to provide weekly virtual clinics to try and keep our kids engaged, our hope is to return to our in-person clinics once again when it is safe to do so.

I am also the chair of our Parents' Committee, and some of the feedback we have gotten about our clinics is the plethora of things parents have to consider when deciding whether or not they can attend. We always choose locations that are ADA accessible; however, that is not always sufficient. Parents must consider how far away from their homes the event is, whether there will be adequate parking, and whether or not there will be facilities they can use for hygiene. We take for granted the fact that public restrooms have changing tables for small children, but as those children grow, it becomes more difficult to find a sanitary space to help our loved ones in the bathroom.

Parents struggle to always be prepared, but even if it is a shorter clinic, accidents happen, and it is heartbreaking to try to explain to a child that they have to leave this fun event early because there is nowhere they can get changed, so they have to go home.

Voting favorably on this bill would provide more accessible buildings for our kids and for adults to have more freedom to engage in their community and have more independence, rather than confinement at home. Please consider how we take for granted the ease with which we can access a restroom whenever needed. Our world should be just as inclusive for persons with disabilities of all shapes, sizes, and ages.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Teresa Fox