



Testimony to the House Economic Matters Committee
HB31 Consumer Protection – Right to Repair – Powered Wheelchairs
Position: Favorable

January 17, 2025

The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, House Economic Matters

Honorable Chair Wilson and members of the committee:

I am writing today on behalf of Economic Action to urge your favorable report on HB31, which would require manufacturers of electronic wheelchairs to provide independent repair providers and wheelchair owners with access to necessary documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and tools for repairs, under fair and reasonable terms and costs.

Economic Action, formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advances economic rights and equity for Maryland families through research, education, direct service, and advocacy. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

Economic Action supports this bill because it ensures that individuals who rely on powered wheelchairs have the ability to access necessary repair resources without being forced to go through costly and limited manufacturer-authorized channels. A powered wheelchair can cost as much as \$50,000, and due to the limited suppliers of parts, repairs are often too expensive to be fully covered by insurance¹. By allowing independent repair providers and owners to perform repairs, the bill promotes greater choice, affordability, and convenience, while helping to prevent monopolistic practices that could drive up costs of repair.

Using a powered wheelchair is not a choice for many facing disabilities. It is crucial that, as a governing body, Maryland takes whatever steps possible to ensure that the use and maintenance of such wheelchairs is affordable for all.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB31.

Thank you for your time,

Zoe Gallagher, Policy Associate

¹<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/why-do-wheelchair-repairs-take-so-long/#:~:text=Some%20of%20the%20parts%2C%20especially,insurance%20is%20willing%20to%20pay.>

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