



HB 31: Consumer Protection - Right to Repair - Powered Wheelchairs

Testimony of the Maryland Independent Living Network

SUPPORT – Favorable

House Economic Matters Committee, January 21, 2025

The Maryland Independent Living Network is a coalition of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council and the seven Maryland-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs are created by federal law. CILs work to enhance the civil rights and quality of services for people with disabilities. There are seven CILs located throughout Maryland, operated by and for people with disabilities. CILs provide Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services to individuals with disabilities in their communities.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in **support** of HB 31.

HB 31 requires powered wheelchair manufacturers to make available certain documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and tools to independent repair provider or owner of a powered wheelchair. Furthermore, HB 31 provides that a violation of the Act constitutes an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice and is subject to certain enforcement and penalty provisions. The bill would be applied prospectively.

It is well documented that individuals with disabilities that use powered wheelchairs experience long wait times for repairs to be completed on their powered wheelchairs. To the extent that the bill's requirements can shorten or eliminate wait times for powered wheelchair repairs, the bill would sustain the independence of individuals with disabilities that use powered wheelchairs.

The bill in its current form could be problematic if owners and users of powered wheelchairs attempt to make repairs themselves once they have acquired the documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and tools under the bill's provisions. To the extent that an owner and user of a powered wheelchair attempts to repair their own powered wheelchair in which the repair is not successful could exacerbate the initial problem requiring the repair and create safety issues for the user if not completed properly. Accordingly, consideration of an amendment that excludes owners and users of powered wheelchairs from obtaining documentation, parts,

embedded software, firmware, and tools may ensure that qualified persons and independent repair providers who then obtain the required documentation, parts, embedded software, firmware, and tools under the bill's provisions would complete the required repairs in a timely manner.

We appreciate the consideration of these comments. Accordingly, the Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** HB 31.

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