

Submitter: Cassie Wilson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2422

Good afternoon Chair Fahey and members of the committee,

My name is Cassie Wilson and I'm a resident of Boring. I'm excited to be here today to ask you to join me in supporting HB 2422 to cover the costs for reasonable accommodations for disabled legislators.

I'm 24 years old and am grateful to have been born after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. As part of the ADA generation, I've been able to point to this legislation every time I encounter inaccessibility or discrimination. Unfortunately, I've had to point to it a lot because we still have a long way to go in creating a world that is truly accessible and equitable to disabled people.

In every school I've attended since kindergarten, I've had to sit down with administrators to explain how they needed to make the school more accessible. When I wanted to work in the music industry, I was instead hit with the realization that most concert venues are inaccessible here and across the country, so I started a nonprofit to advocate for accessibility in live music. In nearly every space I have entered as a student, a worker, a volunteer, a community member, I've had to advocate for increased accessibility.

Disabled people often experience what is referred to as the #CripTax. While already often facing lower wages, disabled people have higher costs of living because of things that are needed to survive or fully participate in society. This includes mobility aids not covered by insurance, higher costs of accessible housing because it is often newer construction, accessible vehicles, pre-prepared food and grocery delivery, adaptive clothing, and so on.

I share all of this with you to emphasize the importance of ensuring disabled people don't end up paying out of pocket for the accessibility and accommodations we need to serve in the legislature. Despite being a quarter of the population, we seriously lack disability representation in the legislature. We must take any opportunity to reduce barriers for disabled legislators, so when we arrive we're better able to focus on serving our communities like anyone else. I say 'we' because I, too, hope to run for office someday.

I dream of a future where disabled people don't have to break down barriers in every space we enter and can just be and do what we're there to do. This bill gets us another step closer to that future.

As the late disability rights activist Judy Heumann once said, “Disability only becomes a tragedy when society fails to provide the things we need to lead our lives.”

Thank you to Rep. Hudson for putting this bill forward, and I hope you all will join me in supporting it.