

Public Health Committee Public Hearing
February 21, 2007

Testimony on SB 1052
AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM FOR TRANSPORTING PATIENTS TO HEALTH
CARE APPOINTMENTS.

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the committee, I am submitting testimony today in support of SB 1052 to establish a pilot program to increase transportation so folks can get to health care appointments. Public transportation has been a chronic issue for our state especially in the rural areas where public routes and taxi costs are often beyond people's financial means.

I had first hand experienced with lack of transportation to health care appointments when I acquired a spinal cord injury in 1990 at age 26. I was hospitalized for 4 months and then discharged to my parents home in North Haven. I had no personal transportation at the time and had to rely on my parents for support. As with any serious condition I needed to continue outpatient treatment after discharge but had no way of getting there independently.

I was told to contact Dial a Ride to get to my appointments, but unfortunately the service did not meet my needs. Dial a Ride would only schedule transportation the morning of the call and often required long wait times between drop off and pick up even if you were able to get a ride. If I was unable to get a ride I would have to reschedule and sometimes be charged for canceling the appointment. Additionally, in my situation I could not physically stay in my wheelchair for long periods of time because my "sitting capacity" had not developed since I was so newly injured. So the long periods between drop off and pick would put me at risk for additional health issues. Public transportation by bus was also not available close to my neighborhood and multiple bus transfers would have made it extremely difficult. As a result my mother had to take time off work to bring me to appointments.

Flash forward 17 years – I now live independently, work, and drive my own vehicle. I am extremely fortunate to have these resources at hand. I saw this Bill and contacted Dial a Ride to see if there had been any changes regarding their program and was advised they are still running the program as they did in 1990. Please understand I am not disparaging Dial A Ride – but I still see we have an issue regarding transportation.

I would totally support a pilot program that addresses the issue on several levels

- Provides either gas cards or reimbursements to family members/neighbors or volunteer town programs that will address this simple need.
- Provide the resources and supports necessary to expand existing programs that work.
- Fund public transportation that targets routes to medical facilities.

Transportation also needs to be nonrestrictive in traveling to the location of service. I don't believe I have ever been able to get the type of care I need for my condition within the town I live – and can't afford to move where the care is available. The pilot should include reasonable checks and balances.

I look forward to seeing the passage of legislation that will seriously work to address this community concern.

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