



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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February 5, 2013

Testimony to the Aging Committee
Senate Bill 521: An Act Concerning a Report on the Survey of Accessibility in and to State Buildings.

Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, and Members of the Aging Committee.

My name is Mike Demicco, Representative from the 21st District, Farmington and Unionville.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about this important bill regarding accessibility in and to State buildings.

The Americans with Disability Act of 1990 and the amendments since then have changed the lives of many Americans by providing them access to public and private spaces that were not previously available to them. The ADA provided the first comprehensive civil rights laws for individuals with disabilities and continues to play an essential role.

Several of my constituents, as members of the Citizens Coalition for Equal Access (CC=A), have worked diligently to ensure greater access to public buildings for all persons, notably resulting in the installation of power-assist doors in the Farmington and Unionville Post Offices. The sense of equality, empowerment, and fairness that these projects engendered cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

As you are aware, current law excludes buildings, including state buildings, built or substantially renovated before October 1, 1977 from being in compliance with the provisions of the ADA (CGS § 29-269(a)). The law also allows the state building inspector and the director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities to jointly grant a variation or exemption for the accessibility requirement in any buildings, including state buildings, when such construction would not be feasible or would unreasonably complicate their construction, alteration, or repair (CGS § 29-269(b)).

As a result of these exemptions, persons with disabilities are frequently unable to conduct personal business with the State as independent adults.

In order to remedy this situation, Senator Beth Bye and I have submitted proposed House Bill 5353: An Act Requiring State Buildings to Be Accessible to Persons with a Disability, which has been referred to the Public Safety Committee. House Bill 5353 would amend the general statutes to require that no later than January 1, 2021, all existing state buildings that the general public may require access to in order to conduct business be handicap accessible.

We would like to ask that the provisions of our bill be incorporated into Senate Bill 521, in order to strengthen the Bill.

These two bills seek to create the environment that is necessary to allow many individuals to interact with their State government.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.