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Public Hearing
Public Health Committee
Testimony in Favor of Raised Bill 274
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Greetings Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Melissa Marshall. I live in West Hartford and I'm here today in my capacity as Coordinator of the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, a coalition representing people from all disability groups. I urge you to support Raised bill 274 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF STREAMLINING WHEELCHAIR REPAIRS FOR RECIPIENTS OF MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.

First, I would like to thank the legislature for drafting and considering this bill. The issue of wheelchair repairs is a critical one for many members of the CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance. We have alerted the Commissioner numerous times about this problem. It is not uncommon for wheelchair users to languish in bed or in ill-fitting, inadequate equipment for weeks and sometimes months waiting for wheelchair repair.

The lack of timely wheelchair repairs is highly costly to the state. When wheelchair users' equipment is broken they are often forced to use wheelchairs that are inadequate for their needs and/ or which does not fit them properly. This can result in pressure sores or other injuries which can require hospitalization and sometimes surgery.

Beyond that, the lack of reliable wheelchairs robs people with mobility disabilities of their independence and their dignity. People who use wheelchairs cannot pursue or retain employment as long as their equipment is so unreliable.

In this time of fiscal crisis it is especially incumbent upon the state to ensure that each dollar is being spent wisely. Examining how long it takes to repair wheelchairs and why this is the case is a good way for the legislature to ensure that Connecticut's money is spent wisely and that independence is being fostered for all.

Please consider Raised Bill 274 favorably.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.