



CT State Independent  
Living Council

151 New Park Avenue, c/o NCAAA #75, Hartford, CT 06106

March 29, 2023

The CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance is an organization that addresses policies and concerns affecting people with disabilities in Connecticut. The Alliance is coordinated through the CT State Independent Living Council and is comprised of organizations and agencies serving people with disabilities as well as parents and people with disabilities. Over the last few years the Alliance has become increasingly concerned with access issues at the Legislative Office Building as they relate to people with disabilities during the legislative session. During this legislative session the challenges for people with disabilities have increased as they attempt to participate in the public legislative process. We have reached out to Mr. Tamburro at Legislative Management in three separate letters dated January 28, February 14 and March 20. We had one reply, which rebuffed our suggestions and did not even offer an opportunity to meet to discuss the issues further. In our letters we have requested that Legislative Management:

1. **Hire an Americans with Disabilities Act or Accommodations Coordinator** – It is not sufficient to refer people with disabilities to Brian Lencz, the facilities coordinator. The Legislature needs one ADA Coordinator who can work with both the facilities staff and the committees to effectively address ADA related issues and accommodation requests.
2. **Develop an Accommodations Policy and Procedure that Must be Followed by all Legislative Staff for Any Legislative Events.**
3. **Require the Coordinator and at least 2 backup Staff to Receive Training**
4. **Legislative Staff Training** – An initial orientation training for staff and at least annually thereafter,
5. **Publicize the Accommodations Process and Contact Information for the Coordinator.**
6. **Supervision of the Coordinator** - In addition, Legislative Management should identify who the Coordinator will report to in the event of any issues.

Yet, the violations of ADA have continued. Therefore, on Friday March 24 the Alliance filed four separate ADA complaints with the Department of Justice. These relate to

various requests for accommodation across different committees.. Here is a summary of those complaints, which are attached.

1. An individual with Cerebral Palsy requested to speak at the beginning of the hearing so that her PCA could read her testimony, since her cerebral palsy affects her speech and it is difficult for some people to understand her. Her PCA was only available a few hours and could not wait all day for her turn to speak. She was told by the committee clerk that "we don't do that".
2. Five individuals who are deaf blind requested an interpreter to testify at a public hearing. The committee did arrange for the interpreter and set aside time at the beginning of the hearing for all five of them to testify. However, the interpreter stated she was only hired to interpret for the first two individuals, and then left. The other three testified with assistance from a non-certified friend who felt it was important for the committee to hear their testimony.
3. A group of five individuals who are wheelchair users were told they could wait for their turn to testify in another room so they would not block access for anyone else. They would be provided with a monitor to watch the hearing from there.
4. Individuals in two separate buildings at Whiting Hospital wanted to testify virtually, but needed a scheduling accommodation so that they could testify early in the hearing. This was necessary so that they could access the one computer in each building, as well as a staff person in each building. They could not tie up the computer all day. At first they were told no, then told they could wait and testify at the end of the hearing, and finally assigned staggered numbers from 9 to 30.

As you can see from these examples, each committee handles accommodations differently requiring a call to each committee clerk when a person with a disability wishes to testify. These complaints reflect an overall lack of knowledge of ADA as well as an inability to assess and respond individually to requests for accommodations on the part of Legislative Management. The lack of a structured and consistent process is a discriminatory barrier that denies people with disabilities access to the programs and services of the Connecticut Legislature.

These complaints are recent examples of a long history of failure to accommodate people with disabilities in the legislative process by denying the accommodations under the ADA. We have provided Legislative Management with remedies, to which we have received an inadequate response that did not address the full scope of the accommodations necessary to provide accessibility to the Legislature's programs and activities. The predictable result of this lack of leadership has led to further violations since our first letter in January and our second letter in February. As illustrated in the attached complaints, we had no choice but to file four complaints with the US Department of Justice.

We are asking that the Legislative Management Committee instruct Mr. Tamburro to meet with us immediately and develop a plan to address these issues so that legislative management will cease excluding people with disabilities.

In order to begin addressing this, Mr. Tamburro needs to finally take our concerns seriously, starting with a meeting as soon as possible with people who have lived experience and their advocates. At this meeting we can develop a plan to address these issues so that people with disabilities receive individualized and appropriate accommodations in the legislative process. This meeting should be attended by at least one person in leadership in the House and In the Senate. We need to see substantive responses from Mr. Tamburro to each of the several demands in our letters to him. It is critical that the voices of people with disabilities be heard in this vital legislative process.

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