



CT State Independent
Living Council

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Jim Tamburro
Executive Director
Office of Legislative Management
300 Capitol Avenue, Rm. 5100
Hartford, CT 06106

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. The Alliance 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. We understand that Substitute Senate Bill 126, enacted in 2022, required a study of physical accessibility at many government buildings including the LOB and Capitol. We would like to see the results of this study. And while we understand this was a physical accessibility study, one critical element of such a study should have been contact with individuals or agencies serving people with disabilities. To our knowledge no such contact was made.

We do appreciate this effort to look at physical accessibility, but the concerns of the Alliance are more far reaching than physical accessibility, including the process to request and arrange for appropriate accommodations for public hearings, committee meetings and other public opportunities to have all voices heard. The current bulletin states that persons requiring a sign language interpreter must make their request at least 10 days in advance.

“Hearing assistance devices are available for all hearing rooms and the House and Senate chambers. Sign language interpreters are available for access to the legislative process. Request should be directed to the Committee Clerk or the Office of Legislative Management at (860) 240-0100. All requests for accommodation should be made at least 10 days in advance.”

Hearing notices are usually posted five days prior to the hearing. That makes access to accommodations inaccessible for anyone needing an accommodation to participate in the hearing process. Further, it has been our experience that during the very busy time of public

hearings it is extremely difficult to identify and reach the clerk at each committee. This is a cumbersome and difficult process for those requiring accommodations. It often results in individuals not participating, since many do not have the technology to submit written testimony, and in fact want their voices heard.

Zoom has proven to be a great access tool for many people with disabilities, and we are pleased that there will be hybrid public hearings this year. We also know that some individuals prefer to testify in person, and that Zoom cannot be the fallback accommodation for people wishing to participate in the public legislative process. When testimony is being given via Zoom it is also extremely difficult to arrange to have both the sign language interpreter, English/Spanish interpreter, or support person on camera at the same time the person is providing testimony. Thus it is critical that we continue to respect the personal choice of every citizen regarding their method of providing testimony.

Therefore we are requesting that one point person should be identified by Legislative Management to arrange for all accommodations, including sign language interpreters.

We appreciate your attention to these issues as we make the legislative process one that all our citizens can access. Do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of assistance in addressing these issues.

Sincerely,

Molly Cole, Executive Director
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