



January 8, 2024

Representative Michael Vose, Chair
House Science, Technology, and Energy Committee

RE: House Bill 1047 – relative to establishing a committee to study the effectiveness of state outreach to residents without computer access.

Dear Chairman Michael Vose and Members of the House Science, Technology, and Energy Committee,

My name is Vanessa Blais, and I am the Director of Policy and Planning of the New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council). I am providing testimony on behalf of the DD Council membership, which believes this bill would have a positive impact on the developmental disability community.

Our Council, by law is comprised of at least 60% people with developmental disabilities and parents or guardians of people with developmental disabilities. These members are volunteers advocating for disability justice.

According to the most recent University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability (UNH IOD) Disability Compendium, 12.1% of New Hampshire residents are currently living with a disability. This means that about 1 in 8, just over 166,000, Granite Staters have a disability. It is more essential than ever to continue to support inclusion and enhance the lives of the disability community.

As New Hampshire residents, we all know the internet and phone connection throughout the state can be lackluster at best at times, making it difficult for many residents to access important information that will affect their supports and services. For residents without computer access though, it can be near impossible. The developmental disability community makes up an inequitable portion of these residents, and for them, information and services are in grave need. If the state cannot ensure that they are being provided necessary information in a timely manner, it can appear as if they are not offering the services at all.

Along with this, it is essential that state outreach to all Granite Staters be in Plain Language so that individuals throughout the spectrum of ability and knowledge of subjects important to them can fully comprehend the information being sent to them. We believe that Plain Language is the most accessible and appropriate way to disseminate information to residents throughout the state, regardless of ability or subject understanding.

We believe establishing a committee to study the effectiveness of state outreach to residents without computer access can lead to better understanding how lack of technology can create a barrier to people receiving the services they need.

Sincerely Yours,

Vanessa Blais, Director of Policy and Planning