



February 1, 2024

Representative Ross Berry, Chair
House Election Law Committee

RE: HB 1264-FN – relative to the definition of accessible voting systems.

Dear Chairman Berry and Members of the House Election Law Committee,

My name is Chase Eagleson, and I am the Policy and Planning Coordinator 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.

Decisions made in local and municipal elections are the most directly impactful to members of the voting community. The votes casted at these elections are seen every morning by community members and impact things such as infrastructure funding, community development, and local education standards. With these facts in mind, it seems that the ability to vote in these elections should be strongly ensured so that no voter is barred from having their voices heard in their communities, no matter their ability. House Bill 1264 will ensure that voters, who need supports in the voting process, are able to do so independently and privately, and that in these directly impactful elections, the voices of the aging and disability communities are heard and not silenced.

House Bill 1264 would reinforce the voting accessibility promise made in Title 2 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which states that “...people with disabilities [must] have a full and equal opportunity to vote”.

The Secretary of State has repeatedly stated that this bill would create logistical issues when it comes to programming each tablet for each election and transporting them safely and securely back and forth between the towns/municipalities and the Secretary of State’s office. This is not a valid argument to disenfranchise disabled voters from participating in their local elections. To quote one of my favorite childhood Disney movies Pocahontas:

“Sometimes the right path is not the easiest.”

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.

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. We thank our legislators for their service to our community and for taking our testimony into consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Chase Eagleson, MCD, Policy and Planning Coordinator