

Accessibility & Inclusion Consulting, LLC  
Annette Bourbonniere  
33A DeBlois St., Newport, RI 02840  
Phone: 401-207-9840



Testimony re: **25 House 6122**, RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT –  
CIVIL RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Position: **For**

My name is Annette Bourbonniere, and I live in Newport. I am a disabled citizen of Rhode Island.

Until 1977, when disability activists occupied the federal HEW building in San Francisco for 26 days, demanding the enforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, people with disabilities had no civil rights in the United States. Many people with disabilities were confined to institutions, and those who were not were unable to access buildings, public transportation, and accommodations that provided for the equal education of persons with disabilities. Those activists endured significant challenges so that we could all have the same rights as all American citizens.

Now, Section 504 and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act that followed from it are being threatened by a lawsuit filed by 17 states in the federal court and may be in further jeopardy by the current administration.

One of the consequences of losing Section 504 would be that students with disabilities would no longer have access to the accommodations that provide true access to education. 504 plans and IEPs (Individual Education Plans) would no longer exist. Access to these accommodations provides a path to good jobs and economically stable lives. Many students with disabilities go on to make significant contributions to society because they were given the tools they needed to fully access public education. We cannot risk losing this.

Losing access to public spaces, voting rights, and even living in the community are at risk. The resurgence of institutionalization would be worse than any nightmare you have experienced. Remember the Ladd School or the old IMH? We cannot go back.

This bill will protect these rights for anyone in Rhode Island. We will not have to fear going back to the pre-1977 times when “Ugly Laws”, institutionalization, and all forms of discrimination existed. In Rhode Island, we will have the same rights as all American citizens.

I thank the sponsors for introducing this bill and this body for its consideration of it. I appreciate your recognition that people with disabilities are valuable contributors to

Email: [Annette@Access-Include.com](mailto:Annette@Access-Include.com)

BlueSky: [@access-include.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@access-include.bsky.social)

Podcast: [www.Patreon.com/NothingWithoutUs](https://www.Patreon.com/NothingWithoutUs)

society and worthy of the same rights as all Americans. I am proud of Rhode Island for fighting for us in this turbulent time.

I urge you to vote **yes**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Annette Bourbonniere