

Steven Sepe

From: Cathy Andreozzi <candreozzi@prodigy.net>
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2025 5:19 PM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: House Bill No. 5611

I'm here today in support of **House Bill no. 5611** and I thank you for the opportunity to share from a personal perspective to the need for and the difference a universal changing table can and will make.

A very long time ago as a young mother with two little children, I took for granted that anywhere we went, there would be facilities that met our needs. A space that would be accommodating, safe and dignified.

When life changed traumatically for my family, I was not able to find the same equity in accommodation, safety and dignity even in meeting the most basic of human needs.

For my family that change came at the hands of an impaired driver and rendered my then bright, active 12 year old, a quadriplegic who lived in a minimally conscious state. And while She was no longer a martial arts world champion, a straight A student on the national honor society, she was still a daughter, a sister and a cherished member of a family. And while, I couldn't bring back her athleticism or watch her excel in educational endeavors, I could make certain she was an active participant in everything family oriented.

I proudly told people; Tori went where we went. She was present at birthday parties and weddings, plays and concerts, press events and galas. And it took tremendous planning, lots of sweat equity, and numerous precarious situations.

I remember changing her in a small bathroom off of the lobby of the PPAC. With barely enough room for her chair, let alone me – I had to place my daughters' legs in the sink to try and get some leverage to be able to lift her lower half enough to try and slide a brief underneath. We missed a huge portion of the show because of the lack of accommodation.

Most venues couldn't even provide that much, I would have to wheel Tori outside to her van, lift her out of her chair and transfer her to the bench seat. I would try to shield our windows best as could be and cringed at that lack of dignity. The

moment seared in my mind is one when trying to lift Tori back into her chair she slipped from my grip and I had to ease her on the floor. On the floor-over the course of the next 45 minutes I tried several times to get my daughter up-with no success-anxiously looking for some one who might be able to help. No accommodation, no dignity and no safety.

Even with barriers, we were undeterred, and we were fortunate. You see, I was still strong and able bodied enough and my daughter was petite. Genetics was on our side. Over the years I've met so many families that are not as fortunate. Aging parents or spouses and full-sized adults make even attempting the task an impossibility. Worlds became even smaller, more isolated and result in a poorer quality of life.

Broadly speaking, **100 million US adults function as caregivers**, providing care for a child, parent, or other relative. More narrowly, there are 53 million US adults who care for a spouse, elderly parent or relative, or special-needs child. **In 2023, there were an estimated 121,000 family caregivers in Rhode Island. These caregivers provided an estimated \$2.1 billion worth of unpaid care.** And, that care is given freely and lovingly. And, all we ask for us the opportunity to be a family, to care for our loved ones in the best way possible and to provide equity in accommodation, dignity and safety.

Sincerely,

Cathy Andreozzi

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When you come to the edge of all
the light you know,
and are about to step off into the
darkness,
faith is knowing one of two things
will happen...
there will be something solid to
stand on, or you will learn to fly.