

Chairman Evan P. Shanley
House Committee on Corporations
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

In support of House bill H-7050

Dear Chairman Shanley and Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections;

My name is Jeanine Calkin and I am from the town of West Warwick. I am writing today in support of House bill H-7050.

This bill does two things: first is to replace wording on all new or replacement signage to "Accessible Parking" rather than "Handicapped Parking", "Disability Parking" and "Disabled Parking". The second is to require municipalities to participate in a parking mobility app program to allow users of the app to report when someone illegally parks in an accessible parking spot, and allow the municipality to fine the owner of the vehicle.

The term "accessible parking" is often used instead of "disabled" or "handicapped" parking to be more inclusive and respectful of individuals with mobility issues. The language around accessibility has shifted in recent years to reflect a more person-centered approach. Why?

1. **First, it focuses on the person, not the condition:** "Accessible" emphasizes that the space is meant for anyone who needs it, regardless of whether they have a disability, injury, or temporary condition that limits mobility. This puts the focus on the need for access rather than labeling the person based on their condition.
2. **Second, to avoid stigmatization:** Terms like "handicapped" or "disabled" can carry negative connotations and may contribute to stigmatization. "Accessible" is a neutral, positive term that underscores the goal of ensuring equal access for everyone.
3. **Finally, the legal and societal shift:** Modern disability rights laws (like the Americans with Disabilities Act in the U.S.) prioritize access for individuals with a range of mobility challenges, not just those with permanent disabilities. Using the term "accessible" reflects this broader understanding of who needs special accommodations.

Accessible parking promotes respect, inclusivity, and equality, encouraging a more modern and empathetic approach to language.

In regards to why the use of this app is needed.

1. **Improved Accessibility for All:** Accessible parking spots are specifically designed for individuals with disabilities who need closer and more convenient access to buildings

and public spaces. Ensuring that these spots are only used by those who genuinely need them improves accessibility and ensures equitable access to public resources.

2. **Public Awareness and Accountability:** An app empowers citizens to report violations, which can help raise awareness about the importance of accessible parking. People may not always be aware of the impact of taking a spot that is meant for those with disabilities. Public participation via an app encourages accountability among drivers and may reduce misuse.
3. **Efficient Enforcement:** Law enforcement or local parking authorities often have limited resources for patrolling parking lots. An app enables citizens to report violations in real-time, leading to quicker response times. This can help municipalities better allocate their resources and enforce parking regulations more efficiently.
4. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Apps can collect data on the frequency and locations of parking violations, providing municipalities with valuable insights on problem areas. This data can be used to adjust policies, improve enforcement, or address areas that need more accessible parking.
5. **Community Engagement:** Encouraging residents to report these incidents fosters a sense of community involvement and shared responsibility. It allows municipalities to engage with citizens in a modern, tech-savvy way, improving the relationship between local governments and the public.
6. **Cost-effective Solution:** Instead of hiring additional parking officers or investing heavily in manual systems, municipalities can leverage technology to streamline the process of identifying and addressing parking violations. This could lead to cost savings in the long run.
7. **Enhanced Compliance:** Knowing that there is an easy way for people to report violations may deter some drivers from parking illegally in accessible spots, leading to greater compliance with parking laws.
8. **Promote Inclusivity:** Encouraging the use of such an app highlights the municipality's commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, and the welfare of people with disabilities, aligning with best practices and legal obligations (like the Americans with Disabilities Act in the U.S.).

Overall, this type of app can help municipalities improve the accessibility, fairness, and efficiency of parking enforcement, while also strengthening community involvement and support for individuals with disabilities.

I hope that you will consider the passage of this legislation this year.

Thank you,
Jeanine Calkin