



January 22, 2025

Chairman Lynn

House Judiciary

Subject: Testimony in Opposition of New Hampshire House Bill 80

Dear Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in Opposition of HB 80. For the record, my name is Krysten Evans and I am the Director of Policy for ABLE NH. ABLE is a disability justice organization and we are a non partisan, non profit organization that fights for the civil and human rights of children and adults with disabilities.

HB 80 seeks to restrict the ability of public body members to participate remotely in meetings, and mandates physical presence for voting. Such a proposal inherently excludes individuals with disabilities, significantly hindering their ability to engage in civic processes.

Restricting remote participation erects unnecessary barriers for people with mobility challenges, chronic illnesses, or other disabilities that complicate physical attendance. According to the 2023 Report on New Hampshire Disability Statistics by the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, approximately 166,073 residents, or 12.1% of the state's population, have a disability.

Studies by the National Disability Institute demonstrate that economic and mobility barriers disproportionately hinder their participation in in-person meetings. Removing remote access silences these voices and undermines inclusive decision-making.

HB 80 represents a regressive step that undermines the principles of equity and inclusion. Requiring physical presence for participation creates significant barriers for individuals with disabilities, amplifying inequities. I respectfully urge the Committee to reject this bill and instead champion policies that advance civic engagement and accessibility for all.

Sincerely,



Krysten Evans

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Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “Disability Impacts All of Us.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 16 Sept. 2020, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html.

National Disability Institute. “Financial Inequality: Disability, Race and Poverty in America.” National Disability Institute, 2019, www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org.

New Hampshire Office of Legislative Budget Assistance. “Remote Access and Civic Participation.” Legislative Budget Assistance Reports, 2023.

Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire. 2023 Report on New Hampshire Disability Statistics. Institute on Disability, 2023, iod.unh.edu/new-hampshire-disability-statistics/2023-report.