



Date: February 25, 2022
To: Planning & Development Committee
From: Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations, The Alliance
Re: S.B. 126 An Act Requiring a Study Of The Accessibility of the State Capitol Building, Legislative Office Building and Related Facilities.

Good morning Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Hwang, Representative Zullo and distinguished members of the Planning & Development Committee.

My name is Ben Shaiken, Director of Government Relations at the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association of community nonprofits. Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving hundreds of thousands of people in need - and employing 115,000 people. They are an important part of what makes Connecticut a great place to live and work and an important piece of our economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of S.B. 126 An Act Requiring a Study of the Accessibility of the State Capitol Building, Legislative Office Building and Related Facilities.**

In normal times, when the State Capitol is open to the public, nonprofits and the people they serve are active participants in their democracy. They often bring groups of clients and staff to the Legislative Office Building and State Capitol to advocate for issues important to them and the services they provide. Many people with intellectual/developmental, physical and mental disabilities are among the strongest advocates.

We appreciate the Committee placing a priority on improving the accessibility of legislative faculties. We would like to highlight two issues that create the greatest challenges for people with disabilities:

1. Parking – When multiple nonprofits bring people with disabilities to the State Capitol at the same time, the parking capacity for the vehicles required for their transport (vans) is extraordinarily limited, as many vehicles do not fit in the garage. These challenges are exacerbated on days when the legislature is in session, and therefore the parking lot on the Capitol grounds cannot be utilized.
2. While the Legislative Office Building is generally easy to navigate, the State Capitol itself is not accessible, particularly for people needing to access the opposite side of the Chamber to use the facilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act turns 32 this year, and it is past time for the Capitol to be made to be in better compliance with its building accessibility requirement.

In closing, we also want to recognize and acknowledge the Office of Legislative Management, and particularly State Capitol Police Department, who have been as accommodating as they can when The Alliance organizes hundreds of people with disabilities to our annual “Advocacy Day.”

Thank you for your time and consideration.