



May 23, 2023

Representative Penelope Tsernoglou
House Committee on Elections
House Office Building, Room 327
124 N. Capital Ave.
Lansing MI 48933

Dear Chairwoman Tsernoglou and Members of the Committee,

Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) is the private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization mandated by federal law to provide information and advocacy to people with disabilities living in Michigan. DRM is pleased to comment on House Bill 4568, which would eliminate a ban on paid transportation for voters.

As we know, suitable, accessible, affordable transportation is a major barrier to community engagement for people with disabilities in general and an area DRM is increasingly engaged with. In the most recent election, DRM received multiple referrals from constituents or service providers seeking rides to the polls, as did other disability advocacy organizations such as Detroit Disability Power and Centers for Independent Living. It appears that transportation is one of the most significant barriers to in-person voting for people with disabilities in Michigan.

[US News & World Report ranks Michigan #40/50 on transportation and #43/50 on infrastructure, and #25/50 on public transportation usage](#) (which is of course impacted by infrastructure and availability), highlighting the need to eliminate additional transportation related barriers to voting and other community engagement.

This ban not only limits the ability of organizations and businesses to help alleviate this barrier as a community service, but also creates a chilling effect where organizations who may still be allowed to organize/provide transportation on a volunteer basis opt to not take the risk of violating this ban and/or opening themselves to politically charged scrutiny.



Due to this ban and resulting chilling effect, this is an area of voter advocacy where we have struggled to provide referrals or develop any remedy. The ban causes a disproportionate barrier to in-person voting for people with disabilities, who already face significant barriers to accessing transportation, and is not supported by evidence that prevents undue influence on voters. People without reliable transportation should not be limited in their options to vote and people with disabilities are among those with significant barriers to reliable transportation. Absentee voting should never be treated as an alternative to accessibility, nor does it address the needs of voters whose access to transportation changes on election day.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 4568. Please contact me at rprevatt@drmich.org if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

Rachel Prevatt
Voter Engagement Specialist at DRM