

Testimony on HB1169
2023 Legislative Session
January 12, 2023

Rep. Dan Ruby, Chairman; Transportation Committee

Good morning, Chairman Ruby and members of the committee. My name is Sarah Carlson. I live in Dickinson, ND and I am writing this, representing my own thoughts and not on behalf of my employers. I hope to enlighten you all in a simple, but profound change needed for mobility-impaired license plates. I am in favor of HB1169

My 10 year old son, Beckett, uses a wheelchair. He got his first wheelchair when he was 3 (picture below). It was small enough that we could pack it in and out of the hatch of my small vehicle with a little assembly. This is also when we approached his physician to start the process to get mobility-impaired vehicle plates. Especially in the winter and navigating snow, it is helpful to park nearby the entrances. Pushing a wheelchair through slush or snow can be nearly impossible.

Today, we own a modified minivan that has tie down straps designed for wheelchair use because Beckett's wheelchair is no longer easy to assemble. It's not a public transit giant bus, it is our family's vehicle that looks just like all the other minivans on the road (photo below). It supports Beckett with having a quality of life. It gets him rides to and from school, to baseball games, doctor appointments, and the Medora Musical, holiday with family, among other places. We recently traded in a different accessible vehicle for the van we own now, so I have knowledge of the current value of these vehicles. The cost for a USED, modified Chrysler Pacifica minivan ranges from \$60,000 to \$87,000. The conversion cost starts around \$35,000, so that is in addition to the existing value of the vehicle.

The way the current century code is written, for us to get the mobility-impaired symbol on the license plate of our vehicle, Beckett's name needs to be on the title of the vehicle. How many of you have put your three-year-old on the title of the vehicle? Maybe not a three-year old. How about a ten-year old? Beckett is eligible for Medicaid because of his disability. For Medicaid eligibility, a person can have one car, but most people on Medicaid meet Social Security financial qualifications and have less than \$2,000 or \$3,000 of assets. So we would be putting Beckett's name on the title of a vehicle valued more than \$60,000. In addition to that, if Beckett would unfortunately die, Medicaid could perform an estate recovery, and Beckett would be a part owner of the vehicle if his name is on the title of our vehicle. So, as part of that estate recovery, they could make a claim against the value of the vehicle even though he has contributed exactly zero dollars toward the purchase. A person's disability has zero to do with the ownership of a vehicle an everything to do with the accessibility needed to access public buildings/parking.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please vote in favor of HB1169.

Sarah Carlson
Cell: 515.450.7378
scarlson@ablend.net

