



SCR 4004
House Transportation
Thursday, March 16, 2023
Representative Dan Ruby, Chair

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee:

My name is Roxane Romanick and I'm writing as the representative for Designer Genes of ND, Inc., as their Executive Director. Designer Genes' membership represents 230 individuals with Down syndrome that either live in our state or are represented by family members in North Dakota. Designer Genes' mission is to strengthen opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome and those who support them to earn, learn, and belong. I am also the parent to an adult daughter with Down syndrome, who desires as much independence as any other youth adult and who is working and trying hard to be a contributing North Dakota citizen.

Designer Genes is in support of SCR 4004 and asks for your consideration of a "yes" vote. Ask any non-driving individual with a disability and/or who is aging about how they access their community and you will need to be prepared to hear about how difficult and limiting it is to not be able to drive. North Dakota is not a state that is friendly to non-drivers due to our rural nature and vast spaces. The community of individuals with Down syndrome that I represent, especially our adults, are greatly impacted by not having more independent means of travel as most of them are not drivers. We have heard that more and more activities are limited for our individuals with Down syndrome that live in a group or apartment setting as public transportation options decline and there are decreasing staff available to provide transportation through our providers.

Presently, my husband and I are working out a weekly schedule with our daughter to decide how to make sure she can get to and from her job. She does have a para-transit pass for the Bismarck Transit system; however, the rides are not dependable for getting to work on time and long wait times, no subscription services, and difficulty with scheduling make return trips also impossible to count on. While her work is only about a seven minute ride from her home, in order to use the fixed route bus, she could

have an hour wait in an unheated bus shelter. She is very adept at using a Ride Share app like Uber or Lyft, but a ride to work for her is roughly \$8.00 one way and this would total to around \$250.00 a month. She has also found that Uber and Lyft drivers are not always available. Bismarck no longer has an active taxi service. Right now, transportation is probably her greatest barrier to living as independent as possible.

Lack of transportation options has its costs. The Automated Vehicle Services for People with Disabilities—Involved Responsive Engineering (ASPIRE) Center at the University of Pittsburgh ([UTC Spotlight Newsletter - January 2022 \(transportation.gov\)](#)) in their most recent publication that “mitigating transportation-related barriers for people with disabilities would enable new employment opportunities for approximately two million people with disabilities and save \$19 billion annually in healthcare expenditures from missed medical appointments alone.” While Medicaid has the ability to cover non-emergency medical costs, there are no options available for individuals to use outside of the onerous demands of the para-transit system.

I believe that a study of the transportation options for people with disabilities would shine a light on the impact that this has for them to be fully contributing members through employment, shopping, and engaging in their communities. I also believe that understanding this better could leave to more creative solutions than what we have available to use right now.

Please consider the passage of SB 4004. I’m available for any questions.

Roxane Romanick
Executive Director
Designer Genes of ND, Inc.
701-391-7421
info@designergenesnd.com