



**HB 1106**  
**House Transportation**  
**Thursday, January 9, 2025**  
**Rep. 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.,. 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 young adult and who is working and trying hard to be a contributing North Dakota citizen.

Designer Genes is in support of HB 1106 and asks for your consideration of a "yes" vote. Ask any non-driving individual with a disability and/or who is ageing 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 the 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.

In the past, my husband and I worked out a weekly schedule with our daughter to decide how to make sure she could get to and from her job. She had a paratransit pass for the Bismarck ParaTransit system however, the rides were not dependable for getting to work on time. Long wait times, no subscription services, and difficulty with scheduling made return trips also impossible to count on. She is very adept at using a Ride Share app like Uber or Lyft, but a ride to work for her would have been roughly

\$8.00 one way and this would total to around \$250.00 a month. She also found that Uber and Lyft drivers were not always available. Bismarck's taxi services are expensive for someone on a fixed income.

Elizabeth now lives in Minot, ND but her accepting her job at Minot State University was dependent on her finding housing close to the campus to avoid needing daily public transportation. Transportation is probably her greatest barrier to living as independently 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 \(transportation.gov\)](#)) noted in one their publications 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 can 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 state sponsored support for increased transportation options for people with disabilities would have direct impact on individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities to be fully contributing members in their communities.

Please consider the passage of HB 1106. I'm available for any questions.

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