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The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities “Texas Capitol Accessibility Report”

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The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) is a 501(c)3 working to ensure that persons with disabilities may work, live, learn, play and participate fully in the community of their choice. We focus on the areas of governmental advocacy, public awareness activities, and professional disability consulting to fulfill our mission. CTD is the largest and oldest member driven cross-disability organization in the state.

At the request of the Texas State Preservation Board, CTD has put together this report to bring attention to some of the issues and suggestions that our members, disability advocates, parents, professionals and other stakeholders have experienced first-hand, in regards to accessibility issues at the State Capitol. This report may not cover every issue that visitors or constituents encounter, but gives the state an overview of some of the barriers faced by Texans with permanent disabilities as well as what their families and friends face.

CTD is a cross disability organization and attempts to represent all disabilities as best we can. We strongly suggest that as the State moves forward to improve access and participation at the Capitol, that multiple disability organizations are included in the process of gathering information for future plans. CTD hopes that the plan will not only assess the accessibility needs and note

improvements on current weaknesses, but will also pave the way for greater inclusion of all Texans to participate in their government, including people with disabilities. This is the perfect opportunity for the State of Texas to become recognized as a national model of accessibility, not just for architectural accessibility, but for full participation of Texans with disabilities in the government process.

Accessibility Issues and Suggestions

Below you will find six categories: mobility, visual, audio, sensory, website/technology and person to person interactions, each category will have a few of the main issues sent to us by stakeholders along with a few suggestions. After reading this section I would recommend reading the "Capitol Accessibility Questionnaire Responses", a sample of some of the direct responses from stakeholders.

Mobility:

- **Accessible Parking Issues:** Lack of and commonly used by State staff, needs even distribution around Capitol and a few that are protected from having to unload in traffic.
1. Parking in the visitor garage is controlled by a gate that most people with a physical disability who are driving can't reach to activate and remove the ticket that raises the gate arm due to their disability, therefore they can't access the garage. The garage also has a 8ft max height clearance which stops a majority of raised roof accessible vans and converted trucks that use cranes to unload their wheelchair.
 2. This leaves only 5 protected accessible parking spaces located on the east side of the Capitol at 12th street and two at the corner of 12th and Brazos. These five accessible parking spots are typically inaccessible to

visitors as they are used by state employees from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

3. Two of the accessible parking spots at the corner of Brazos and 13th street have been removed and marked in red paint as a tow-away zone and currently used by what looks like maintenance trucks.
4. Need for some type of shuttle service to and from the garage for those with disabilities and for those who are aging and have difficulties with the distance.
5. Unloading zone at each entrance for people with disabilities and DPS officers trained to allow this. Many comments received of unpleasant confrontation with Capitol security while trying to get someone close enough to unload then go find parking.
6. There is currently no close parking or drop off zone near the Capitol Visitors Center where you must go if you need to rent a wheelchair.

Suggestions: Increase the amount of accessible parking spots on the east side of the Capitol grounds, replace the signs of the two accessible parking spots that were removed at the corner of Brazos and 13th Street, look into restricting the accessible parking to visitor only parking, and create marked loading and unloading zones for people dropping off someone with a disability along with training of Capitol security on this issue.

- **Physical Access Issue:** Lack of accessible entrances and exits.
1. Many people commented on the inability to access the Capitol from the south side of the building, where most of the rallies are, this leaves them unable to access the

front or middle of the rally and if they need access to the restrooms they must find someone to help them push all the around to the north side, wait to go through security then finally make it to the restrooms. Situations like this can cause a person to leave and lessens their chance of participating in the future.

2. When large rallies are being held that a person may not be attending on the north side many people are unwilling to push their way through a crowd to reach the only accessible entrance. This is even more so if it is a controversial topic and the person trying to access the building holds different beliefs then those at the rally.
3. In an emergency if the north side of the building were blocked it would leave no accessible exit for a person with a mobility impairment to exit the building independently. Many times during the legislative sessions there are easily over 100+ people in the Capitol using a power chair or a manual chair at one time and in the case of a fire, active shooting scenario or handful of other emergencies many of these people would have to rely on others who may or may not have already exited the building. This creates an immediate threat to them and would demand a large amount of the Capitol's security assets that could be better used addressing the emergency at hand.
4. Most buses drop visitors off on the south side of the Capitol forcing people to have to push themselves or a family member all the way up to the Capitol and then all the way around to the other side. This is hard on many of our members along with many older couples trying to access the building especially during poor weather.

5. Every Texan should have the right to enter their Capitol from what everyone considers the "Front Door" not just the back.
6. Lack of access in many of the legislators' offices to get past the front door. Due to the arrangement of furniture in many of the offices, a person using a power chair or standard size wheel chair cannot access the staff offices. Many staffers offer to meet with you right at the front door where everyone is waiting or out in the hallway. This creates a few issues: first being the perception by the constituent that they are not truly welcome, second that your reason to visit may be of a private nature and not something you wish to share with everyone.
7. In crowded hearing rooms during controversial or news worthy hearings camera crews set up in the back where the accessible seating cut outs are located. If a person arrives late many times they won't say anything to the crews so as not to cause any disruption in the hearings.
8. Better access to lowered I-pads for testimony registration as most people think they can't be lowered or they physically can't manipulate the arm into the position independently without asking assistance from a stranger.

Suggestions: Create an accessible entrance on the south side of the Capitol at a minimum, ideally all entrance and exits would be accessible, offer accessible barriers training to all legislators and staff and the importance of access to their constituents, place signs in hearing rooms near accessible seating stating no cameras in this area, and finally mount some of the registration I-pads lower or create signs that explain how to lower them and the steps.

- **Signage and Way Finding Issues:** There is a lack of highly visible signs that clearly mark the accessible entrances, routes, elevators, exits.

Suggestions: Better maps on accessible routes and parking with detailed information found at every entrance and highly publicized on Capitol website, place signs near accessible paths that have basic accessibility information with directions on where to go for more, place phone number on all signs that can connect a visitor with a Capitol staff person who can answer questions about accessibility and assist them if needed.

- **Accessible Family Restroom Issue:** Need for at least one accessible family/unisex restroom in both the Capitol and extension building.
 1. There are no family/unisex public restrooms available anywhere in either the Capitol building or Underground Extension. Many people with disabilities need the extra room for their assistant to help them transfer from their chair and to the toilet and back. These larger restrooms can also be used by the general public when trying to assist their children.
 2. There are also no provisions for requesting or obtaining privacy (through either a lock or a sign) to allow a person with a disability to receive undisturbed assistance with toileting from their personal attendant, nurse or parent, who might be of the opposite sex.

Suggestion: Place signs at each restroom, along with a map showing the location, to inform the public that there are accessible unisex/family restrooms available.

- **Access to Senate Floor, Gallery and House Gallery**
Lifts used to enter gallery and Senate floor

1. Lack of public knowledge on how to access and Capitol staff on how to direct the public.
2. Inability to access floor when Senate press conference room is in use. Can and has prevented people from being able to testify during committee hearings.
3. Staff sometimes can't find the keys needed to make the lifts work.

Suggestions: Access to the galleries and floor should be explained on the Capitol website, a section placed on all visitors guides and maps clearly explaining how to access them, where to find them, and who to ask about operating the lifts. The lifts should be left in the on position so that staff can immediately operate the lifts not go looking for the keys.

- **Elevator Access Issues:** The ability to access the elevators during busy times at the Capitol can cause people using wheelchairs wait times of up to 20 minutes as people cram on and off denying access and passing over that person multiple times.

Suggestions: Need signs giving priority access to those with disabilities during busy times posted in front of the elevators and inside the elevators. Create a map explaining exactly where each elevator goes with each elevator being individually marked/labeled that matches the map. It is very disheartening to wait for 20 minutes to finally get on an elevator just to find out it won't get you where you are going. We have had CTD members not make visit to their legislators because of this.

- **Renting Wheel Chairs Issue:** Many people visiting the Capitol need the ability to rent a chair while they are there. Most don't know after their long walk in they must first go to the Capitol Visitors Center forcing them to walk even farther.
1. Rentable wheelchairs and scooters are limited to a 5:00 pm return time. This forces visitors who have come to meet with their legislator or attend a legislative hearing to end their day before everyone else.

Suggestion: There should be an accessibility office found in the Capitol near the main entrance where people can get materials about their visit and all of the accessibility features offered during their visit. They should also be able to rent a wheelchair at that office and not only over at the Capitol visitor's center. A policy should be created on how to handle allowing a person to continue using the rent wheelchair past 5:00 pm and still be able to return it and retrieve their driver's license or state ID back.

Visual:

- **Elevator Issues:** The elevators do not announce on which floor the doors are opening, causing people with visual impairments to rely on strangers in the elevator to tell them when to get on or to get off. This is not an effective way for someone to navigate a building independently.
- **Committee Hearing Registration Issues:** The registration I-pads for signing in to testify lack the ability to plug in headphones and have the accessibility features turned on to independently register yourself to testify.

1. Committee staff don't always approach people with visual impairments to ask if they need any assistance in getting registered and many first time visitors wanting to testify may not know they need to or how to ask for assistance of the committee staff.
- **Navigating the Capitol Issues:** Navigating the Capitol with a visual impairment can be a very daunting task even with someone assisting you. There is currently a lack of accessible materials like maps and legislative office handbooks with Legislators names and office numbers in braille, large print or electronic format that would allow them the ability to navigate the Capitol independently. With today's technology we can make it much easier for someone to find exactly where they need to go.
 1. Currently there are no tactile maps or any accessible format materials available.
 2. Lack of training by Capitol staff to offer any assistance to those who may request it.
 3. Lack of new navigational technologies that could be employed to assist many with visual impairments and could also be used by the general public to make their visit easier.

Suggestions: Work with the blind and visually impaired communities on best practices that the Capitol could follow in developing accessible format materials, tactile maps and trainings that would educate the Capitol staff including committee staff on assisting people who are blind or visually impaired. The committee registration I-pads have increased accessibility for many people with disabilities, but still needs work for those with visual impairments. As you go through those steps of improving the I-pads you

should involve some of the end users to assist you. Update elevators to announce on what floor the doors are opening, this may even reduce times during crowded days as people don't step off and back on once they notice it's the wrong floor. Engage in new technologies like audio maps that can be downloaded before their visit, talking signs that can be placed throughout the Capitol grounds and triggered by a receiver or an app on your cell phone. Provide guides who can assist people with visual impairments to locate legislative offices and committee rooms. Finally make sure all materials can be found online and that Capitol security has copies at each entrance and is trained to offer it to each person as they enter the Capitol.

Audio:

- **ASL Interpreter and CART Services Issue**, lack of access and knowledge of availability.
 1. Many people don't know how to access the ASL interpreter services at the Capitol or that it is even available.
 2. CART live captioning, which serves individuals who are primarily late-deafened which would include an ever-increasing number of seniors who are not familiar with sign language struggle to hear during most committee hearings. Most don't know this is even an option that is available to them and needs to be posted separately when listing accommodations.
- **Committee Hearing Notices Issues**, have a lack of information on who to contact about accommodations, especially interpreter services and CART services since those must be requested ahead of time.

1. Many people who are deaf or hard of hearing will download the committee hearing notices and at the bottom there won't be anything about whom to contact and by when to request the accommodation.
 2. Many of the committees that aren't related to health and human services or public health ever listed anything about any accessibility accommodations request. People with all disabilities can be found in almost all the committee hearings at some point.
- **Closed Captioning Issue**, during controversial or high interest committee hearings many times people can only access the over flow rooms where watch the hearings on the video screens. The sound is usually very poor in these rooms and people who need to be able to read the closed captioning due to being hard of hearing don't have that option.

Suggestions: Provide assistive listening devices for hearing impaired persons planning to attend any House or Senate floor sessions or committee hearings in large rooms where acoustics can be a problem. Louder audio levels in committee rooms especially overflow rooms to help those with minimal hearing loss hear when seated in crowded or the rear of the room. Create a policy that all hearing notices must have a footer or paragraph that uses the same message about accessibility, participating in the hearing, and how to request, by when and who to request any accommodations that might be needed. Make sure that the Capitol website informs visitors on how to request and find these accommodations.

Website/Technology:

- **Capitol Website Issue**, the Capitol website is very lacking in helping a person with a disability plan any type of trip to the Capitol with or without assistance.
1. The website must have a section added to it listing all of the accessibility found around the Capitol, detailed maps, guides to parking, names and numbers of who to contact about accommodations, printable one-page guides with accessibility facts, and a section on how we can improve.
- **Remote Access Issues**, there is a lack of access for some families with children with multiple disabilities to be able to contact their state Representative or Senator through technologies like Skype.

Suggestions: The Capitol website is one of the most important tools that should be developed and advertised to the disability community. This is the place that many first check to get a feel of how accessible a place may be and can quickly turn away a visitor. The site should be developed to offer every detail a person may need to plan their visit and be fully informed and ready to participate. Work with legislators to create a policy that would allow a family of a child with multiple disabilities and the inability to travel to Austin to be able to use technology like Skype to have a face-to-face meeting with staff or their legislator.

Person-to-Person Interaction:

- **Dedicated Accessibility Specialist Issue**, There is no one person in charge to handle the day-to-day needs centering around access, accommodations,

training staff, answering staff questions and ensuring visitors with disabilities have a great experience instead of never coming back to their Capitol.

Suggestion: Employ a person with a disability to be the Capitol's first full time Disability and Access Officer. To handle the day to day accessibility needs and request of visitors to the Capitol, assist and train legislators and their staff on helping accommodate their constituents, answer general public questions, train all new staff as hired on effective interactions with people with disabilities, maintain and improve all accessible documents needed for visitors. As we stated in the opening paragraph this is an opportunity for the State of Texas to become recognized as a national model of accessibility, not just for architectural accessibility but for full participation of Texans with disabilities in the government process.

Capitol Accessibility Questionnaire Responses

Below are a sample of responses sent in by members of CTD, parents, advocates, professionals and leaders in the disability community.

- I would love to see more signs that clearly mark the accessible entrances, elevators, exits etc.
- Only one ramped accessible entrance, Lack of directional signage for wayfinding, accessible signage lacking, HEAVY doors...everywhere! Access into chambers limited by one small elevator Limited seating/partnering spaces in hearing rooms One walkway on the south end of the grounds has no access at the end so you have to turn around and come all the way back to the Capitol, get in the street and roll back

to 11th street. Accessible street parking, lack there of...taken by employees and not avail for visitors, ever. Little if any van accessible parking, Visitor parking hard to get ticket. Cafe staff are GREAT and very accommodating.

- The front steps are particularly troublesome not only for access into the building, but for access from the street level to the platform area between the street and the steps into the building where many rallies are staged; a ramp is needed.
- My son uses a wheelchair for mobility and it would be very useful to have access to the Capitol at the front entrance instead of going all the way to the back/side to the building.
- It is sometimes a problem finding someone to work the lift to take wheelchairs to the third level. People who just come for the first time may not even know how wheelchairs are to get into the house or senate viewing area.
- Elevators were crowded and would not stay open to enter or exit. The entrances for wheelchair users were difficult to find and the offices of representatives were not accessible.
- The last time I was there, disabled parking had been removed from the grounds of the Capitol. The walk from the parking garage is lengthy and uphill. This makes it difficult to visit the Capitol.
- I assisted a person in a wheelchair while we were at the Capitol. There was only one ramp and we had to walk around to get to it. The ramp itself seemed graded too steep. I think there should be a ramp at every entrance, since this is the Capitol. At the least, have

one also at the South entrance. We also noticed in the bathroom, the paper towels were far away from the sinks. On another trip, the echo bothered my friend's son who has Autism. Maybe headphones can be available for those who have a sensory issue with the echo. It would help to know when a bill is going to be heard. Having a family with special needs, children cannot wait around at the Capitol from 9am to 2am or longer to testify. If they have childcare, then it is difficult to tell a caregiver it might be 4 hours to 17 hours. Having to wait and wait until your bill is called is not effective, efficient, nor accessible to families, who are part of 'the people' too. If we are to be democratic, then ALL should be able to be a part of that process. Right now, it favors those who are lobbyists, those who required to be there through their job and those who are in a profession that is flexible, such as an attorney, real estate agent, or consultant. If this part cannot be fixed, then I suggest a lounge for those who have to 'camp out' in order to testify--with a kids and teen section.

- Communication access at the Capitol is a disaster. During the 2013 legislative session, Mr. David Myers (no relation) went to the Capitol many times and the only times that he had the services of an interpreter was (1) when a hearing regarding a deafness issue was scheduled, and (2) when I brought my own interpreter. He was there many times without an interpreter and unable to effectively participate in the legislative process. In the 90's, the Capitol had a full-time tour guide who was a certified interpreter and was made available as needed for interpreting situations. In addition, during the legislative sessions, an interpreter from one of the state agencies was detailed to the Capitol. The result was that the Capitol provided effective communication to meet the needs of deaf people at all times. Mr. Myers does not know why this

excellent access was discontinued. Dr. Marcus R. Myers, President Texas Association of the Deaf

- When attending events on the South steps of the Capitol, it is a long winding path to a restroom. You have to go around to the north side, through the maze and then into the Capitol and behind the elevators to the restroom. Also need more handicapped parking, around the capitol and on the adjacent streets...and more access into the galleries.. I am handicapped and my husband is 80. Because of the layout, we've just about given up on attending anything at the Capitol due to access.
- Physical Barriers ALL Texans should be able to enter the Capitol through the "front door." I was assisting an individual using a manual wheelchair one day and neither of us considered that we couldn't exit through the front door. We had to then run around the side of the building (I was pushing her) at top speed and we still missed her accessible transport, which caused both of us to get home two hours later. I cannot fathom why all the Capitol's entrances don't have ramps or why any excuse would suffice to essentially bar people using wheelchairs, scooters, walkers and canes--even baby strollers-- from some entrances. Just ridiculous and offensive and a tremendous hassle for many Texans. There should be a balance between preservation and discrimination and where preservation creates a discriminatory situation, then serious consideration should be given to create unique solutions to rectify architectural discrimination. I have also noticed, but am not sure what to do about it, that individuals using wheelchairs are having difficulty with elevators during busy periods. I watched crowds of people surge in front of people using wheelchairs and filling elevators without concern, and I observed this done to one individual using a power wheelchair twice in a row--even though

the individual was the first person in front of the elevator. Apparently, people not using wheelchairs considered it acceptable to rush in front of her and fill up the elevator without offering her any space! Perhaps we will have to somehow educate visitors (and a great deal of staff!) about offering courtesy to those with mobility needs of all types into the elevators? Based on my own observation, I can easily imagine seniors who don't walk quickly being bypassed by the current group of busy elevator-rushers. The more automated doors the Capitol has, the more accessible it will be to individuals using mobility aids, as well as to those with limited hand use, or even to busy legislators and interns with hands full of books and papers. Accessible Communications Many times, I have seen sign language interpreters at Capitol events and meetings. CART live captioning, which serves individuals who are primarily late-deafened--which would include an ever-increasing number of seniors--who are not familiar with sign language. Contrary to opinion, it takes years of classes and practice to learn sign language. Having looped rooms also enhances the sound quality of hearing aids and cochlear implants, especially in rooms that have poor acoustics. (Many rooms at the Capitol have poor acoustics.) Also, videos shown should provide captions, which do serve individuals with deafness and hearing loss, AS WELL AS descriptive voice service, when applicable, which will explain what is visually occurring in videos. I have consistently seen a lack of DVS or knowledge of it almost everywhere I go. Braille and other tactile guides around the Capitol would assist Texans who are blind or have low vision in navigation around the building.

- When seated in gallery or even on dias, as I am when (TSHL) Texas Silver Haired Legislature is in session (as Speaker Pro Tem, TSHL) the sound is extremely poor. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

- My son is 10 1/2 years old with complicated disability case. (Autism, developmental delay, intellectual disability, seizure, learning disability, spinal problem, attention deficit, behavior problems and speech problem). He is not recognizing the letters, numbers, colors and so on. We have been searching and fighting for his rights about 10 years now, but no one hears us. We are in super power country in everything but my son still can not say one simple thing, 1. Please help us even if you give us a chance by meeting our state rep by Skype. Thank you!
- 1. Three of the four entrances to the Main building are inaccessible for people using wheelchairs or scooter. This primary complaint about lack of basic access was also voiced to us by Representative King and Senator Van de Putte after they found they were only able to enter the Capitol with their temporary wheelchairs through the single accessible entrance on the (sometimes relatively distant) North side. The lack of wheelchair access on the South side is especially egregious because of the frequent rallies held there that require any participant using a wheelchair or scooter to go to the completely opposite side of the Capitol building in order to reach the speaker's stage area - a.k.a. the South Steps (but STILL be unable to enter the building due to the additional steps at the South doorway). 2. Besides the north end of the Great Walk or Walkway, there is only one small ramp on the eastern edge and about halfway up for access that allows people using wheelchairs and scooters to enter the Great Walk. In other words, wheelchair and many other mobility device users must travel across or through a motor vehicle lane intended for traffic to access this small ramp. Alternatively, they must use the sidewalk to go to the top of the Great Walk in order to reach the bottom. There seems to be ample space

behind either of the two small walls adjoining the 11th Street steps and gate for providing an accessible ramp to the bottom of the Great Walk. But the Preservation Board continues to neglect this opportunity for access improvement even though many marchers frequently use the 11th Street entrance to the Great Walk as part of their route to hold rallies at the State Capitol! 3. There are NO Public Unisex Restrooms available anywhere in either the Capitol building or Underground Extension. Also, there are no provisions for requesting or obtaining privacy (through either a lock or a sign) to allow a person with a disability to receive undisturbed assistance with toileting from their oppositely sexed personal attendant. This has caused excessive waiting, inconvenience, embarrassment, harassment and potentially legal entanglement for some guests who simply wanted to use the restroom. With the prevalence of private restrooms throughout the buildings that are available for staff and members, it should be relatively simple to reallocate and designate some of these resources to meet accessibility needs. Additional sensitivity training of janitorial staff is recommended as well. 4. The fairly recently installed I-pads for speaker sign up at various committee hearings have fairly accessible articulating positional arms for people using wheelchairs. Unfortunately when left extended, they present a walking hazard for persons with visual impairments. They can also be difficult to locate by persons with visual impairments. A wooden "kick box" installed underneath the I-pad's area could serve as an identifier and warning device for visually impaired persons who use white canes for mobility. (This access problem identification and improvement recommendation came from a person who is blind.) 5. People with Cognitive and Intellectual Developmental Disabilities could benefit from an easily identifiable locations system (color coded stripes on the floor with correlated maps?) to help them find their destinations.

Actually, this type of mapping system could help everyone who may easily get lost in the Capitol and Underground Extension. (ex. "Follow the Green Line to Senate Finance") Thanks Chase for following up on this initiative and requesting so much input. Let us know how the meeting goes.

- I went up to the Capitol for one day/evening this past summer during the special sessions. I encountered several different issues. When my friend Katherine agreed to pick me up and take me to the Capitol for the final day of a debate, I needed to find out what their accessibility was like. Specifically, as someone who can't stand for extended periods of time, I wanted to know if they had wheelchairs available for patrons of the Capitol.

I went to the Capitol's website and looked at their [accessibility information](#). Here's what it had to say about physical access:

To request this service, please call [Capitol Visitor's Services at] (512) 463-0063. The office provides wheelchairs and can conduct tours using sign language. If requests are made in advance, the office will try to make whatever accommodations are needed. The Senate Sergeant's Office handles special accommodations for senate hearing rooms, and the House Sergeant's Office handles special accommodations for house hearing rooms. Capitol Visitor Services will gladly forward requests to either office, as appropriate.)

I was a little concerned that the Capitol had no immediately obvious dedicated accessibility office other than the Visitors Services. But I called them anyway. I was informed that two wheelchairs (only TWO?!) were available on a first-come, first-served basis. I would have to leave my driver's license in order to take one of

the chairs; I would also have to return it by 5pm in order to get my license back. I asked her if she was aware of what had been going on in the Capitol regarding HB2 and pointed out that having to return the wheelchair at 5pm might not be sufficient if the proceedings went until all hours of the night. She double-checked with her supervisor (she said) and came back to confirm that the information she had given me was accurate. Obviously, this was disappointing news to me.

- Once inside, the building is reasonably accessible. However, there are very few parking places that are reserved for permits and they are not close. The location requires being able to navigate slopes that are difficult for many. Those spaces that are designated for permit holders are rarely available. When available, usually require getting out in traffic or on curbs. I have been yelled at and treated very rudely by guards when looking for a parking place, or having a colleague drop me off. We would have been happy to move when asked, but the delivery of the message was really inappropriate.
- In my experiences working with colleagues with disabilities, the biggest barrier that they face at the Capitol has to do with technology. One example is the opinion registration system in the Senate. By going wireless the House made changes to their testimony registration process that make it easier for everybody, not just people with disabilities, to register their opinion or testify at a hearing. Placing kiosks all over the Capitol means that people with disabilities are able to register opinions from the main floor, which is easier to navigate than the upper/lower floors. The Senate has not made these changes and still relies on papers cards, which must sometimes be delivered to the Senate chamber. This can be a big problem for people

with disabilities who are unable to use stairs because the elevators are overly crowded, and the Senate chamber itself is not easy to maneuver during crowded hearings. There also are not captions on the television feeds in the overflow rooms of crowded hearings, making it almost impossible for someone with hearing difficulties to follow along.

- It is not possible to get someone in a wheelchair any closer to the Capitol than about 2 blocks away. To my knowledge there are only two handicapped parking places (still 2 blocks away). One day, I was trying to unload my passenger from my car so she could get on her crutches and move into her wheelchair. I had driven as close to the Capitol as I could (but was not in a parking space while I unloaded her). A security guard very unpleasantly yelled at me to move my car even though he could see what we were doing (it would not have taken more than 2 minutes). The current situation is very difficult when it is raining, or extremely cold or extremely hot. As you know, only one entrance to the Capitol is wheelchair accessible so depending on where you park, the distance to get into the building can be even further. I encourage you to greatly improve access to the Capitol, especially since that is where the decision makers are. Disabled people do not need any additional barriers to participating in the legislative process.
- There should be more accessible parking spaces nearer to the Capitol. Approaching the building from the west, you can get stuck on the west lawn because there is no curb cut down to the west driveway. There needs to be one family restroom in the extension and one in the Capitol so that people of the opposite sex can help with transfers out of wheelchairs. This could be husband-wife, parent-child, paid staff or friends of the opposite sex, etc.. It should be large enough for a power chair to

make a turn (5-6 diameter turning space). The route to the lift to the Senate Chamber should have better signage. Likewise with the House. The route to speak on the Capitol steps is ridiculous; there should be a ramp in front. Thank you for considering these things.

For A Barrier Free Texas,

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