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**Testimony on House Bill 7159
An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government –
Departments of State Government**

January 25, 2024

Dear Chairperson Baginski and Members of the House Committee on Innovation, Internet, & Technology:

The Rhode Island Developmental Disability Council would like to recognize and thank Representative Vella-Wilkinson and the Committee for taking this action which will begin to address the long standing issues regarding equal access to state government web sites for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

This bill would begin to open state government up to those with disabilities, especially those with vision impairments and others that must rely on adaptive equipment such as screen readers when accessing the internet. More and more the only efficient way to obtain information, apply for benefits and services, and participate in state government is through the internet. However, if the web sites you need to visit are not accessible to you, you are locked out of the process or must rely on third parties to act as a relay which can be difficult, time consuming and most importantly, infringe on your privacy and right of self-determination.

House Bill 7159, when enacted, will set all state departments on a course to reach a high level of accessibility (WCAG 2.1 Level AA) for their respective web sites.

The Council is willing to work with the sponsor and the Committee to bring this much needed iprovement in accessibility to fruition.

Sincerely,

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