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Testimony re: **26 Senate 2178**, An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Parking Facilities and Privileges

Position: **Against**

My name is Annette Bourbonniere, and I live in Newport, Rhode Island.

My opposition to this bill is the same as my opposition to 16 House 7308.

I am opposed to this bill because it is a feel-good piece of legislation that does not have real value. Instead, it will endanger wheelchair users who are not in the designated vehicle.

First, what is the value of adding a special license plate for adaptive vans, since these were replaced with the parking placard that allows persons with disabilities access to designated parking spaces or parking meters? This parking placard applies to the occupant of the vehicle, whether that person is the driver or a passenger, and can be moved to any vehicle that the disabled person is occupying. A special license plate is redundant.

Second, the State of Rhode Island allows a sales tax exemption when registering a modified vehicle, so all the documentation outlined in this bill is provided at that time. Doing it again is an administrative chore that neither the State nor wheelchair users need.

Third, and this is the most important point, when the wheelchair user is not the driver, these drivers frequently assume that the parking privilege means they can occupy space in a way that endangers other wheelchair users, using the excuse that they are “helping someone with a disability.” They state this as though “helping” someone outranks the person they are leaving in inclement weather or in the line of traffic. They do not understand that lowering the ramp in the curb cut is not necessary. It is safer for others around them and no additional bother for the passenger if the ramp is lowered directly onto the sidewalk. I cannot count how many times these drivers who were “helping” someone else left me out in bad weather, or – and this is the worst issue – in the middle of the line of traffic, when they have pulled up to the curb cut while I was crossing the road. Unloading a passenger before or after the curb cut without blocking it is the safe way for everyone. Please do not give them another excuse to endanger us.

I thank this committee for your thoughtful consideration of these issues.

Submitted by,

Annette Bourbonniere

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