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Subject: Yes for SB 47

Hello Representatives,

To you and your staff a Happy Monday. It is indeed a cheerful day because I get to write you to ask for your support of **SB 47: "An Act relating to special registration plates for vehicles owned by persons with disabilities."**

As a traumatic brain injury (TBI) survivor for almost half my life, disability advocacy is close to my heart. And now that folks are both living longer and experiencing chronic conditions during younger years, disability is commonplace, although hard to see. That being said, even neurologists can have a difficult time during 20min appointments (all in one small room) ascertaining the physical limitations of a patient. Especially when it comes to patients who "look normal" I've found that physical therapists have a much better grasp of topics such as fatigue or vestibular (balance) dysfunction.

I've never had a disability placard. I spent the first year of my recovery from the TBI not driving at all due to double vision. I returned to driving after taking driving lessons in Fairbanks and being tested by Providence's Disabled Driver's Program — part of Outpatient Occupational Therapy.

And yet, when a relentless myofascial pain syndrome commandeered my life, applying for a disability placard was never an option my numerous medical providers suggested. It could have assisted me to function, cope and live autonomously — isn't that what we all want?

When I was struggling to finish my Natural Sciences degree, I had a neurologist who specialized in chronic pain syndromes tell me that he felt hesitant to write a disability placard for someone who could walk to class. Things were probably lost in translation as we only had a few minutes at the end of an appointment for an injections procedure. Plus, I felt timid and stigmatized even asking.

Whereas, I've seen a physical therapist (MOMT) who had the clinical insight for how post-concussion symptoms could be significantly debilitating. Those appointment conversations were also much more in-depth about exercise and ways my mobility or endurance were impacted by my health issues. An example would be that driving was causing significant pain and we addressed how to help me function independently as best as possible.

I believe both practitioners, if they had the time, would reach similar conclusions about my limitations. Disability isn't always obvious and Ability is not all-or-nothing. So many of us live in these in-between places where a little compassion and help goes a long way. I send along my kind regards as you make your decisions.

Dogidinh,
(thank you)

Sigourney Walker