

Dear Representative Thompson,

Thank you for sponsoring HB77, the Disability Training and ID Bill. I strongly support HB77 because this bill will make sure that law enforcement professionals will be educated about disabilities and how a disability affects a person's everyday life. These professionals will become better equipped to interact with people who experience either an apparent or non-apparent disability.

I also support HB77 because it will enable people who experience a disability to voluntarily have a discreet marker placed on an Alaska Driver's License or ID card. This marker will help a professional recognize that the person in front of them has a disability, even though it may not be initially apparent to the professional.

I am a Wallbuster and have been working with other Wallbuster's and your office from the beginning on this legislation. I have always believed in its importance and need but in 2014 had a personal experience that really brought the reality of the changes that needed to be made to my own doorstep. It became very apparent to me the need for additional training for law enforcement and how they interact with people with disabilities, especially non apparent disabilities. Because of a domestic issues state troopers were called to our home in 2014 in the middle of the night. I told the 911 operator that my husband was legally blind and repeated the same thing to the two troopers that responded to the call and came to our home. At no time did the officers acknowledge my information or ask or act in any way to show they understood how this disability would affect the way they communicated with my husband during the event that took place. I believe the interaction had a potential to become explosive due to this lack of understanding/action.

I believe this bill legislation will go a long way toward safer encounters between people with disabilities and law enforcement. The training will help officers better understand and safeguard the right of people with disabilities. HB77 will help improve the lives of Alaskans with both apparent and non-apparent disabilities and improve the quality of law enforcement officers throughout the state.

Again, thank you for your support,

Juanita Webb