



NORTHEAST INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM INC.

Senator Walter Timilty
The State House
Room 329
Boston, MA 02133

Regarding: Testimony on **H68** – Governor’s Proposal - An Act to reorganize the Department of Public Safety

Dear Senator Timilty:

I would like to submit testimony concerning HB (House Bill) 68, that is called “An Act to Reorganize the Department of Public Safety.” This (Article 87) plan would transfer the functions currently within the Department of Public Safety to the Division of Professional Licensure and to the Department of Fire Services. This will enable the Commonwealth to consolidate licensing functions currently split across several secretariats, thereby increasing efficiencies, eliminating redundancies, and improving customer service by creating one-stop shopping for the vast majority of license approvals. The Governor believes this should also save the Commonwealth approximately \$800,000 in FY2018.

Specifically, if passed, this bill would establish an Office of Public Safety and Inspections to be housed within the Division of Professional Licensure, within the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. It then transfers all of the non-fire-related functions of the Department of Public Safety to the Office of Public Safety and Inspections and the fire-related functions to the Department of Fire Services.

In the long run, it does not appear this plan would be in the best interest of people with disabilities who reside in Massachusetts. I cannot support this proposal as it is now, because, in my opinion, that the AAB would get buried in a morass of redesigned structure and experience no growth or a budget reduction along with significantly diminished autonomy. In my opinion, moving the Board underneath a new Office of Public Health and Inspections could result in making it somewhat invisible. This sends a message to the public that not empowering the Board, and people with disabilities, seniors and others would perceive the changes in that manner. These changes do not capture the purpose, function and successes of the AAB, in my opinion.

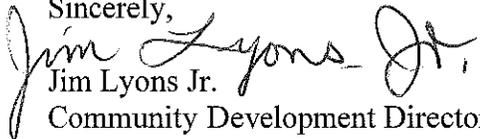
If passed, the Governor asserts that it would also change the distribution of agencies under the undersecretaries within the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to more closely align with their areas of expertise. I believe that the Massachusetts AAB ought remain at its current level in state government. *I am proud to* have worked with the Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP) since November of 1981. I was certified as a Community Access Monitor by The Mass Office on Disability in 1984, and was among the first Certified CAM’s. At The NILP, we always advance a true community awareness of the philosophy of Independent Living. We

are a consumer-controlled Independent Living Center providing advocacy and services to people with disabilities who wish to live independently in the community. The NILP is a community of people who open doors to create an all-inclusive community that is free of architectural, communication, attitudinal, as well as economic barriers for all people with disabilities. The Independent Living philosophy states that people with disabilities are the best determinants of their own needs and service choices. Through role modeling and peer counseling with other individuals with disabilities, they become empowered to make changes in their lives to become more self-sufficient and self-reliant.

It is our contention that The Board's jurisdiction must be expanded and not reduced in order to submit its regulations to the Department of Justification for certification as being substantially equivalent to Title III of the ADA. The Architectural Access Board promulgates rules and regulations designed to make public buildings accessible to and safe for use by persons with disabilities.

In my opinion, this consolidation would ultimately result in cutting the overall budget in the name of "efficiencies and economies of scale." I feel that it is likely, in my opinion, that the AAB would get buried in a morass of redesigned structure and experience no growth or a budget reduction along with significantly diminished autonomy.

Sincerely,


Jim Lyons Jr.
Community Development Director