

My name is Karla Bangert, I am a very proud special needs parent. My daughter, Miss Cloie has cerebral palsy.

The first few years going on adventures with Miss Cloie were simple because we were able to use the infant changing tables that are in most public places. However, these children quickly outgrow these tables when they reach the 40-pound limit. Now what? Where do we go?

Our choices are to return to our van for the changes or lay her on the floor of a public restroom. The van is extremely challenging because of the space needed. Imagine changing an adult over 4 ft on a bench seat that is sized for two adults. It's impossible to get a diaper on correctly and causes leaking before the next change. Laying any human being on the floor of a public restroom is nothing more than being humiliated. It's unacceptable. It's difficult to get her back up off the floor and it's not safe for her or anyone helping her.

Our Miss Cloie will be 23 in October, so our family has been challenged with this for a very long time.

Just last month we visited Minnesota's famous Mall of America because I heard of the adult changing table that was installed in the park. Finding this restroom was a complete game changer to our day. I was able to change Cloie in a private, dignified, and safe place. I had to hold back tears that day as we left that restroom because of this simple change and how it affected our family. That is one family in one afternoon.

Miss Cloie is just one of so many special treasures we have here in Minnesota that need this change. I'm not only here to advocate for my daughter, but for all those I don't know. The parents with little ones that are just beginning their journey as a special needs parent as they have no idea the battles that lie ahead. No parent will ever be prepared as they learn to dream new dreams for their children. But voting in favor of this bill can change the world for them. You need to live it to truly understand the need for this change.

The disability community, for too long, has been left out of the discussions and process that affects us the most. And instead, non-disabled individuals have made decisions without our input and knowledge as the starting point for any issue surrounding this community.

I ask that you support our needs and community by voting to move this bill, SF999, forward as amended so that we, as a disability community, can actually start being a part of our communities as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990 and Olmstead Decision (1999) have stated we should be.

Thank you,

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Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for hearing the need for this important bill...

My name is Karla Bangert, I am a very proud mother of two girls, and I am a special needs parent. My eldest daughter, Miss Cloie has cerebral palsy.

Our Cloie requires a wheelchair for mobility, and she is non-verbal, but that doesn't define her -- she loves adventure and has very obvious ways of showing us her likes and dislikes. She's social -- loves getting out of the house, greeting patrons at the local cafe, going for bike rides, adaptive water skiing, and going for walks. On the other hand, she hates Justin Bieber and doesn't let us forget it. She's 22, an adult. She deserves adult experiences but giving her those experiences is challenging because of something as simple as needing to change her diaper in a private, sanitary, and dignified way.

For the first few years of Miss Cloie's life, going on family adventures was simple because we were able to use the infant changing tables that are in most public places. However, by age 5, she had reached the 40 pound weight limit of these tables. Now what? Where do we go?

Our choices are to stay home, return to our van for the changes, or lay her on the floor of a public restroom.

I'm not even going to spend time on the go home option as that's simply not an option for an active family, nor is it dignified.

The van is extremely challenging because of the space needed. Imagine changing an adult over 4 ft tall on a bench seat that is sized for two adults. It's impossible to get a diaper on correctly and causes leaking before the next change. Laying any human being on the floor of a public restroom is also humiliating, inappropriate, and disgusting. It's unacceptable. Not to mention, it's difficult to get her back up off the floor making it unsafe for her or anyone helping her.

After 18 years of dealing with this lack of accessible changing spaces for Cloie and having her miss out on so many experiences, I was moved to tears just last Sunday when we visited Minnesota's famous Mall of America. I had heard of the adult changing table that was installed in the park. Finding this restroom was a complete game changer to our day. I was able to change Cloie in a private, dignified, and safe place. I had to hold back tears that day as we left that restroom because of this simple change and how it affected our family.

Miss Cloie is just one of so many special treasures we have here in Minnesota that need this change. I'm not only here to advocate for my daughter, but for all those I don't know. The parents with little ones that are just beginning their journey as a special needs parent as they have no idea the battles that lie ahead. No parent will ever be prepared as they learn to dream new dreams for their children. But voting in favor of this bill can change the world for them. You need to live it to truly understand the need for this change.

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