

To: Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

From: Disability Rights Wisconsin (Contact: Lisa Hassenstab, Public Policy Manager, lisah@drwi.org)

Date: January 8, 2024

Re: AJR-1, Requiring photographic identification to vote in any election (second consideration)

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect. DRW is charged with protecting the voting rights of people with disabilities and mandated to help ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities (Help America Vote Act, 42 U.S.C. § 15461 (2002)). The issue of voting rights strongly impacts Wisconsinites who are eligible to vote and have a disability; the CDC indicates 26% of adults have some type of disability, making up a significant portion of the Wisconsin voting population. However, people with disabilities are underrepresented at the polls; the Rutgers University Fact Sheet on Disability and Voter Turnout in the 2022 Elections noted a 11.7% gap in Wisconsin voter turnout between citizens with and without disabilities, up from 10.4% in 2018ⁱ.

DRW opposes AJR-1, which would create a state constitutional amendment to require photographic identification for Wisconsin voters.

Many Wisconsin residents who have a disability do not drive; they do not have a driver's license and may not have other acceptable photo ID required to vote. By positioning the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as the primary place for Wisconsinites to get a photo ID, Wisconsin's voter ID law created inherent barriers for these individuals. Acquiring a photo ID requires access to transportation to the DMV, which is limited for people with disabilities who are non-drivers. While public transportation, where available, must be made accessible for people with disabilities pursuant to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), there are many parts of the state where no public transportation is available, particularly in rural areas. In these places, many people with disabilities have few or no transportation options. WisDOT's 2024 public transit systems mapⁱⁱ demonstrates there is effectively no public transit in Northern Wisconsin, and 14 counties have no form of public transit.

Where volunteer transportation is available it typically is not lift-accessible. Accessible transportation provided by specialized medical vehicles is available only for medical and dental appointments, not for getting to the DMV. The cost for a specialized medical vehicle to transport them to and from the DMV is not affordable to the majority of people with mobility disabilities on a fixed income. Limited locations can also lead to long travel times.

In addition, the initial application for a Wisconsin photo ID is challenging for people with disabilities who do not have the needed documentation. The application process requires supporting documentation including proof of name and date of birth (certified U.S. birth certificate, valid passport, or certificate of naturalization), proof of identify documents, proof of Wisconsin residency, proof of U.S citizenship, and the voter's social security number. Individuals with disabilities often struggle to obtain the documents needed to apply for photo ID due to many factors, including time, cost, and effort when already working to maintain their physical and/or mental health and meet their daily needs. If people with disabilities are able to travel to the DMV and source the required documentation, they often face another set of accessibility-related challenges.

Community members with disabilities have shared concerns with Disability Rights Wisconsin regarding the lack of ADA accessibility at some DMV locations. Based on data from the DMV customer service centers webpageⁱⁱⁱ, 11 DMV service centers provide limited access for people with disabilities; this includes service centers in four of the 100 most populous municipalities in Wisconsin: Fort Atkinson, Platteville, New Richmond, and Sturgeon Bay^{iv}. And for those attempting to navigate information online, the DMV online system is not fully accessible to screen readers, limiting access for people with print disabilities.

While the proposed constitutional amendment would allow the legislature to establish exceptions to the photo ID requirement, this would not fully address the myriad barriers faced by many people with disabilities in Wisconsin in accessing required photo ID for voting that have been identified since Wisconsin's voter ID law was enacted. Enshrining this inequitable requirement into Wisconsin's state constitution would further disenfranchise people with disabilities, who will make up an increasing number of Wisconsin voters in the coming years as the percentage of our population over the age of 60 continues to grow.

ⁱ [Fact Sheet on Disability and Voter Turnout in the 2022 Elections](#)

ⁱⁱ [Wisconsin Public Transit Systems 2024 Map](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Wisconsin DMV Official Government Site – DMV customer service centers](#)

^{iv} Additional locations are Keshena, Luck, Oconto, Peshtigo, Sauk City, Shawano, and Wittenberg.