

**Guide for Submitting Written Testimony on H.1852/S.1164 an Act prohibiting discrimination due to disability during Family and Juvenile Court proceedings.**

**Submitting written testimony:**

- The deadline for presenting oral testimony on the bill has passed, but written testimony may be submitted until the House reports the bill out of committee. **The deadline for submitting written testimony is June 22, 2025, but we encourage you to submit your testimony by early June to ensure that it is read by the committee!**

**Preparing Written testimony:**

- Please reference the bill numbers in your testimony (**H.1852/S.1164**). Indicate that you are supporting the legislation and asking that the members vote it favorably out of committee as soon as possible!
- Write your testimony by focusing on your personal story, including the details of what happened and how it impacted you and/or your community. We have included a template you can use, but we encourage you to customize it as much as possible!
- Speak about how passage of this bill will positively impact you and/or your community
- While there is no word limit to written testimony, we suggest keeping it around 1-2 pages. It is less likely that lengthy testimonies will be read in their entirety.
- Send your testimony to the Judiciary Committee:
  - You can mail testimony to the Judiciary Committee at: **24 Beacon Street, Room 413-A, Boston, MA 02133**
  - Please submit written testimony by email to: **Christianna.Golden@masenate.gov** and **Grace.Giordina@masenate.gov**, both in Senator Edwards' office.
  - Use this as your subject line: **Testimony in Support of H.1852/S.1164**
  - You can put your testimony in an attached .doc or .pdf document, or in the body of the email.

- Cc your state legislators on the email. You can find their emails by going to <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>.
- Bcc [sfein@dpcma.org](mailto:sfein@dpcma.org) so we can keep track of who/how many people have submitted testimony
- If you need someone to email your testimony to the committee on your behalf, would like help writing your testimony or coming up with ideas for what to say, or have further questions, please reach out to Sam Fein at the Disability Policy Consortium:
  - Sam: 617-624-3277 or [sfein@dpcma.org](mailto:sfein@dpcma.org)

**Written Testimony Template:**

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a resident of \_\_\_\_\_. *[Introduce yourself. Are you a member of the disability community, child of disabled parent, parent of a disabled child, representative of an organization?, etc.]* I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 1164 and House Bill 1852, “An Act prohibiting discrimination against adults with disabilities in family and juvenile court proceedings.” I appreciate the opportunity to express my strong support through written testimony.

Parents with disabilities have their children taken away from them at alarming rates. Many people assume disabled people aren’t fit to parent. However, these are just assumptions – disabled people can be just as capable parents as non-disabled parents. Furthermore, removing a child from their parent when it’s unnecessary isn’t just harmful to the parent – it’s also harmful to the child. Family separation is traumatic, and it is in no child’s best interest to be separated from their parent based solely on the parent’s disability.

This issue is important to me because.... *[This is the place to share your story, or why you personally care about this issue! Are you a disabled parent? Have you experienced discrimination regarding your disability and your ability to be a parent? Are you afraid your disability will be used against you in a custody dispute? Has this happened to someone in your*

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*life? Whatever story you choose, answer these questions: What happened? What was the experience like for you? If sharing more than one story, put each new story in a different paragraph]*

H.1852/S.1164 will prevent discrimination against parents with disabilities in custody cases by requiring written evidence of potential harm to the child if the parent’s disability is to be used as a negative factor in the custody or parenting time decision. Furthermore, the court would be required to consider whether potential harm can be alleviated by adaptive equipment or supportive services. This bill does not prevent courts from removing a child from the home if it is truly a harmful environment, but it just ensures that ableist assumptions are not driving the decision. *[Add a few sentences about what it would mean for you or your community if this bill is passed – if you have a related story, would this bill have changed the outcome? Would you feel respected as a disabled person?]*

*[Add anything else about why this bill is important to you.]* Thank you for taking the time to listen to my experience and the experiences of my community. I urge you to vote H.1852 and S.1164 favorably out of committee.

Sincerely,

[Name]