

Testimony regarding House Bill 4151 at the Public Hearing.

Honorable Members of the Transportation Committee;

I wish to submit testimony opposed to allowing the dispensing of gasoline by customers at licensed gasoline stations.

As a person who has been disabled for most of my life, commencing with a childhood bout with polio, I am quite familiar with the difficulty experienced by a disabled driver.

After a significant period of rehabilitation and several surgeries, I finally got to the place where I could walk with the aid of a brace.

Walking was never easy, and as I grew older, osteoarthritis, and increasing muscle weakness due to post-polio syndrome, caused me to need to use crutches, in addition to the brace.

Eventually, the wear and tear made even this mode of locomotion impossible.

At that point, I had to start using a power wheelchair. My shoulders were too seriously damaged by using them as "legs", to use a manual chair .

I have lived in other states where self serve gas is permitted. While each of those states claims to make provisions for the disabled, the reality is that as a wheelchair using disabled person you can not depend on getting gas pumped for you at a self serve station.

We already see the signs that this bill is just a straw man for a future with completely unattended self service.

In one breath the proponents say that there will be no change in employment, and with the next breath they say that it is just too hard to find employees.

The "excuses" for not complying with the rules I've heard in the past, vary. A common one is "I'm not allowed to leave the register unattended." Others include "My manager says I can only leave the booth when two people are here." "I've got a line of customers. You will have to wait." And the ever popular "We were held up last night/week/month. I am afraid to leave the booth."

(You can imagine how "safe" a disabled person feels, knowing that the only other person who might come to your aid is safely sealed in their bullet resistant cubicle.)

Of course, in order to hear the excuse de jure, you have to unload your wheelchair and come to the booth, just to be told that they aren't going to provide the service the law requires.

And I am free to take it up with his manager at an 800 number that is only answered by an answering machine. Your call is never returned. And "This station proudly owned and operated by.." is of no use.

You have no idea what it is like, being disabled, alone, after dark, on a cold winter night, and running low on gasoline.

You end up planning your whole “trip” around making sure you have enough gas to get to someplace safe with the gas you already have.

It is like pretending that your gas tank only holds half as much gas as it does.

There is another aspect to this. In a wheelchair it is difficult to reach the controls on many gas pumps. And when you do succeed in getting the pump to turn on, while sitting in your wheelchair, your face is at the level of the filler nozzle. The fumes and inevitable fuel spills land on you, your clothing, or are inhaled. Your hands stink of gasoline, with no way to wash up.

On some pumps, there is a “call attendant - wheelchair symbol button”. It is often higher on the pump than the other controls you already could not reach! (And the same excuse for not helping will be issued over a loudspeaker!)

You have to be careful to park with enough space between your vehicle and the pump island to actually get to both the nozzle and the fuel cap on your vehicle.

Too close, and you have to go back to your wheelchair lift. Raise the lift. Get back into your seat, move the vehicle away from the island. Get back in your chair. Go back to the lift. Lower yourself to the ground. Go around the vehicle, and try to fuel again.

(Your vehicle, with it’s wheelchair lift extended, and enough space to get between the island and the vehicle, can often block access to the opposite island! This can result in some real hostility toward the disabled driver.)

I had this happen to me, only to find out that the card reader on the pump was broken!

God forbid that you should drop your gas cap. Or need oil, or air in a tire.

This process can take an inordinate amount of time. It can be exhausting.

Multiple trips up and down the lift can deplete the vehicle battery!

I know that you think that you are going to write this new law in such a way that this will never happen.

As sure as daylight comes tomorrow, with the next legislative session, the fuel dealers will be back, saying, that this “burden-some” regulation is just too hard for them to comply with the requirements. And with the stroke of a pen, they will gut your protections for the elderly and the disabled. (Or will lower the penalty to the point where violating the provisions are insignificant.)

I know that using the “emergency clause” is a legislative slight of hand to speed up implementation. In this case, this law desperately needs to take the full, non emergency route. The public needs to know

which legislators see this issue as worthy of diminishing the quality of life and safety for Oregon seniors and the disabled.

Not to mention the number of jobs that will be lost, by those workers who lack the skills and education to get other jobs.

Please reject these amendments to existing law.

If you can't kill it outright, please at least amend the law, removing the emergency designation, such that it won't sneak past the attention of those that will be most harmed by its passage, if it does pass.

This situation will, I predict, get worse as more vehicles are plug in electric vehicles. I have yet to see a wheelchair accessible charging station. And with the long times need to recharge, I can imagine that travel will just get too difficult for seniors and the disabled to attempt.

Oregon is well on its way to banning vehicles which consume petroleum products. A few more years will lead to a decline in the number of people employed pumping gasoline.

The middle of a pandemic is no time to be increasing the number and duration of face to face contacts just to get gasoline.

Please keep Oregon the special and accommodating place that it has been.

Remember that you, or a person you love is just one illness or injury away from being in the same place the "currently disabled" are now.

And unless we die first, we all get old.

Please kill this legislation. For a number of reasons this is the wrong change to be making at the wrong time.

Sincerely

Steve Lancaster