

DISABILITY HISTORY MONTH, MARCH 2023

“When other people see you as a third-class citizen, the first thing you need is a belief in yourself and the knowledge that you have rights. The next thing you need is a group of friends to fight back with.”

— *Judith Heumann, Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*

March is here! Most people rightfully associate the month with the start of the spring season. However, March also holds significance for the disabled community – people with disabilities, if you prefer – because March is Disability Awareness Month!

Each day this month, look forward to a floor letter highlighting important figures in the disability advocacy movement, including politicians across parties, veterans, educators, students, and many great pioneers of disability rights.

Disability is a fundamental aspect of life, it may not affect you directly, but someone you know or someone they know has an experience with disability. Although disability may not be the first thing to come to mind when we think of March, it is essential to honor and uplift those with disabilities by celebrating their outstanding achievements, acts of public service to their communities, and celebrating who they are as individuals.

Disability is incredibly complex in how it impacts different individuals. People with similar disabilities may have wildly different access needs; people with different disabilities also have unique needs. Parents, siblings, and friends of people with disabilities may have alternative perspectives and relationships with disability as well. A most important point to stress is that all people with disabilities have valuable insights to give, a right to be heard, and a need to be supported.

We hope that through this floor letter, each of you has the opportunity to be individually touched by one of the countless stories of the advocacy and activism of the disabled community, that you learn more about the community as a whole, and that you come to understand why support from a legislative body like ours is essential to the continued awareness and well-being of the disabled community.

This letter and these profiles have been developed by Andrew Caruana, an intern in the office of Senator Gelsler Blouin. He is a junior at Willamette University studying philosophy and making his mark as a student leader, peer instructor and thought leader. Andrew is a lifelong Oregonian and has cerebral palsy.

Profiles by Andrew Caruana, Policy and Research Intern, Office of Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin

Sen.SaraGelsler@OregonLegislature.Gov

503-986-1708