



## Disability History and Awareness Month 2023

### Ari



An essential aspect of disability awareness especially worth calling attention to are the disabilities we don't see – either because we literally can't identify that a person is disabled or because they have been undocumented by a physician. These are more colloquially referred to as invisible and undiagnosed disabilities.

Ari lives with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome and Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (EDS and POTS). One is a connective tissue disorder that causes his joints to flare up in pain and dislocate. The other causes a host of effects – the most common being dizziness and seizures when changing position too suddenly. He experiences the symptoms of these disabilities, and he experiences the barriers that exist for someone with those disabilities. However, he has yet to be diagnosed with either.

One of his biggest struggles is balancing his passion for designing art with the physical limitations of his disability – drawing is very straining on his joints. Despite the difficulties in doing so, Ari continues to use his social media platforms to draw and design digital art on commission. He also uses his platforms to spread awareness and discuss the boundaries of invisible and undiagnosed disabilities with his followers.

The image included in today's floor letter is a zebra with the colors of the disability pride flag in place of its stripes was created by Ari for Willamette Universities Disability Advocacy Club. The zebra represents EDS, and each color represents an aspect of disability: red represents physical disabilities, gold represents cognitive and intellectual disabilities, white represents nonvisible and undiagnosed disabilities, blue represents psychiatric disabilities, and green represents sensory disabilities.

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

Andrew is a Junior at Willamette University studying philosophy. He is a lifelong Oregonian and has cerebral palsy.

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