

56-R-10

A Resolution to Establish a Disability Emissary Seat Within the General Assembly

Alex Poling (for himself) introduced the following legislation to the Oversight Committee, where it passed. Then to the floor, where it passed.

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government represents all undergraduate students at The Ohio State University; and

Whereas this resolution uses the words Disability and Disabled given the overall popularity and acceptance of the term among students at The Ohio State University, and it is meant to encompass anyone who identifies with the term or related terms regardless of specific diagnosis or experiences; and

Whereas according to the Organizational Bylaws of the Undergraduate Student Government, the General Assembly may create Emissary Seats with a two-thirds (2/3) vote “to better represent groups that the body feels are underrepresented”; and

Whereas the 53rd General Assembly of the Undergraduate Student Government established a Disability Emissary Seat in February of 2021 with 53-R-26; and

Whereas the 54th General Assembly of the Undergraduate Student Government reestablished a Disability Emissary Seat in November of 2021 with 54-R-14; and

Whereas the 55th General Assembly of the Undergraduate Student Government reestablished a Disability Emissary Seat in September of 2022 with 55-R-9; and

Whereas the original Disability Emissary Seat resolution was written by Alex Poling and sponsored by Delaney Durham, Abigail Berk, and Anshul Singh in response to numerous issues with accessibility and ableism within USG; and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws of the 2020-2021 academic year were repeatedly failed by 53rd General Assembly because they did not explicitly prohibit in-person campaigning during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which especially posed a risk to and failed to account for immunocompromised students; and

Whereas the Judicial Panel of the 2020-2021 academic year refused to change the Election Bylaws multiple times, forcing the 53rd General Assembly to approve them or else the 2019-2020 Election Bylaws, which did not include any guidelines for virtual campaigning, would have to be used; and

Whereas under the current impeachment guidelines in USG’s Bylaws, which did not exist prior to 2023, the actions of the Judicial Panel in 2020 would likely be considered impeachable offenses; and

Whereas the actions of the Judicial Panel in 2020 were the catalyst that led to the creation of the Disability Emissary Seat, along with ongoing issues with accessibility in the organization and persistent dismissal of Disabled students; and

Whereas the original creation of the Disability Emissary Seat received significant pushback from other members of the organization, despite being spearheaded by openly Disabled students; and

Whereas during in-person activities, Undergraduate Student Government events still do not often have captions, sign language interpreters, picture descriptions, or a virtual option, and many do not have a contact for accommodations requests; and

Whereas internal events and socials are still often not accessible and require the use of stairs or other physical activities, and even when forms for requesting accommodations have been provided in the past, there was often no follow-through; and

Whereas rooms chosen for both internal and external Undergraduate Student Government events and activities are often not accessible to those with physical, mobility, or sensory-related disabilities; and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government and other student organizations run social media that do not always provide alternative text or image descriptions within the captions for the blind and visually impaired; and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government and other student organizations website pages often do not include alternative text on pictures or accessibility accommodations like high contrast, bigger text options, or fonts made for dyslexia;¹ and

Whereas 55-R-35: A Resolution to Improve the Accessibility of the Undergraduate Student Government describes the many ongoing accessibility issues within this organization and calls on the Undergraduate Student Government to create a thorough accessibility policy for the entire organization; and

Whereas The Ohio State University's campuses are lacking in availability of resources for disabled students, and

Whereas many Disabled students are facing issues with classes, such as decreased access to class materials because of inaccessibility, severe difficulty accessing accommodations through Student Life Disability Services as well as ensuring professors will honor accommodations, and often an inability to keep their accommodations confidential in the classroom setting, despite legal non-discrimination protections; and

Whereas 55-R-25: A Resolution to Promote Accessibility on Campus for Disabled Students describes a variety of barriers on campus faced by Disabled students; and

¹ <https://usg.osu.edu/>

Whereas campus infrastructure is often inaccessible because of broken pavement, accessible entrances being improperly marked and/or hard to find, several areas being completely inaccessible without the use of stairs or physically opening a door, and certain classrooms having accessible seating only in the back of the room (e.g., the basement of Hitchcock Hall); and

Whereas snow and ice accumulation in the winter provide significant barriers for many students, but especially Disabled students with mobility impairments, who can be completely unable to get to class, dining locations, or other necessities; and

Whereas The Ohio State University has repeatedly decided to continue in-person classes on campus even when parking lots and pathways were covered in snow and ice, which posed a physical danger to all students, but especially Disabled students;² and

Whereas Disabled students have severely limited options for housing, both on- and off-campus, especially given that many residence halls and many off-campus apartments and houses don't have first-floor rooms, which can create a severe safety issue in the event of an emergency, or other accessible amenities; and

Whereas many Disabled students have allergies and/or food restrictions that are not always followed by University Dining, especially with mobile Grubhub orders; and

Whereas Disabled students have fewer opportunities to participate in social events and student organizations because most of them do not have access to accommodations like ASL interpreters, live captioners, or the knowledge and desire to choose accessible locations and accommodate different types of disabilities; and

Whereas there are still no Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS) resources or non-academic on-campus spaces specifically for Disabled students; and

Whereas the Disability Connections group in the Center for Belonging and Social Change was established in the fall semester of 2023 and is the first and only institutionally supported social resource for Disabled students that has ever existed at The Ohio State University;³ and

Whereas the primary non-academic resource for Disabled students at The Ohio State University is Buckeyes for Accessibility,⁴ a student organization which has existed in various forms since the early 1990s despite receiving little to no institutional support and pushback from a variety of groups, including, historically, the Undergraduate Student Government;⁵ and

² <https://www.thelantern.com/2022/02/students-express-displeasure-over-fridays-return-to-in-person-classes-despite-winter-weather-conditions/>

³

<https://cbcs.osu.edu/events.aspx?y=2023&mo=10&day=4&e=79270&all=department&d=8&vp=0&m=Event&v=Grid>

⁴ <https://org.osu.edu/b4a/>

⁵ <https://www.thelantern.com/1999/01/groups-says-it-was-left-out-of-cota-talk/>

Whereas Disabled students face a wide variety of issues and discriminatory practices at this university and from this organization that cannot be adequately reflected in this single resolution; and


Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government has the ability to provide and advocate for students facing these issues but has often failed to do so; and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government cannot properly address these issues without more representation of a variety of Disabled students.

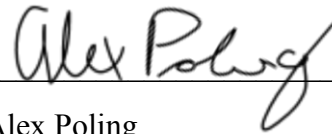
Therefore, Let it Be Resolved that the Undergraduate Student Government creates an Emissary Seat for an undergraduate student who identifies as Disabled to serve and contribute to the General Assembly; and

Let it Finally Be Resolved that this resolution shall have no expiration date.

Floor Vote: Aye: 25 Nay: 0 Abstain: 0 Present: 25



Bobby McAlpine
President



Alex Poling
Speaker of the 56th General Assembly

Date Adopted: October 18th, 2023