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Testimony regarding Discrimination in Transportation for the Physically  
Handicapped Person  
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Prepared for Minnesota Constitutional Study Commission reviewing Articles I  
and Articles VII of the Minnesota State Constitution

There is something very ironical about my appearance here today. If I had had to come from my home to this building, I would have been unable to do so using public transportation; if it had been an emergency, perhaps I could have located a friend willing to take some time off work. But I have come from a distant suburb of this metropolitan area, at great personal cost, and shall have to return to that suburban area (though I have no further business there today) in order that I might eventually get from that same suburban area to my home which is approximately half-way between here and there. By the time I reach my home I will have spent nearly \$20 in cab fare, over half in coming here to explain to you some of the inequities which I feel exist for handicapped people in the area of public transportation. But I do so gladly, hoping that you will see fit to provide the necessary legal language in our state constitution which will begin to get at some of the injustices physically handicapped people face in daily living.

I was born with cerebral palsy, which is a brain injury to the central nervous system, affecting me primarily in the area of motor function and coordination, thus making it impossible for me to drive my own car. I live alone with an aging mother and have no family resources for transportation. During my childhood and adolescent years transportation was not a problem for it was provided by the Minneapolis Public School system as a part of my educational process. I was also provided rides by my father, who was a vibrant and physically capable man until the year 1963 when he was struck by a number of illnesses, which led to his death five years ago. Since my father's illness I have had to seek out forms of transportation on my own. It has been only the exceptional case that provided me with a low-cost and sustaining series of rides. My main source of transportation has been the private cab companies of this area, some of whom have refused me service from the very beginning, though I am able to get in and out of the average car with little or no assistance. I was fortunate enough to travel with the same cab company (Yellow Cab)

from 1963 until 1971 with few problems. In June of 1971 I was refused service, without warning, by that company, which claims to have a picture of the ramp leading into my house and further claims that it supplies insufficient access for a person of my needs. The ramp was built and designed by a man who was crippled himself and spent much of his life helping crippled people less fortunate than himself. On the basis of that picture, which I have never seen, the cab company in question claims that it cannot afford to handle the high risk insurance it says is necessary in such cases. An investigator for the hearing has spoken to the company's attorney who claims there are no extraordinary insurance problems involved. Now, I am not asking for preferential treatment from cab drivers. When I travelled with the company in question, my mother used to push me to the curb and would oftentimes meet me there unless the driver "offered" to help me to the door, which was commonly the case. It is my understanding that at that point he took responsibility into his own hands which I neither asked him to assume nor was he obligated to assume. Then quit suddenly when my work took me to the suburbs, my transportation was cut off by people, many of whom extended their good wishes at the time of my ordination.

There followed a series of interviews, letters, and phone calls which led steadily downward. In my searching for alternative forms of transportation I came across a number of agencies specifically designed to help the handicapped, but each one seemingly more expensive than the other. Throughout last winter I travelled with a company (Trevilla) that charged me \$5 one way from my home to my church; that is \$1.45 more expensive than the metered cab fare. Again without warning, that assistance was stopped in mid-March when I was told that the company had received a special contract to bus school children for a limited period of four weeks. However, when I called back four weeks later; I was again denied service, this time with the instructions that they would all me if they could help. Interspersed with this type of problem-solving, I have looked in<sup>to</sup> private transportation via want ads and still other agencies specifically designed to help the handicapped. In two cases, I was turned away by the company saying it wouldn't be worth my while-- i.e. Handi-Van (\$16.50 one way with an additional 50¢ per mile) and Handi-Cab (\$6.75 for the first three miles and 65¢ each additional mile). Needless to say, these are exorbitant fees being asked of that segment of society often least able to pay.

At the other end of the spectrum in the small suburban cab company (Town Taxi) from which I now receive excellent service at standard rates, on a limited basis, though, because of their franchise. They seem to welcome helping whomever they can, but with the stipulation that all drivers need not be expected to transport handicapped people. They are not only friendly and courteous

but often provide more help than I may need. However, they are unable to provide me with transportation within the metropolitan area and so if I have to get somewhere using their services, I oftentimes have to go out of my way to do so.

It would be my hope this legislative committee ~~if~~ could begin the process of equalization which is needed for all people, using the structures which exist insofar as possible, without creating new structures which suggest a "separate but equal" identity. As a handicapped person, I am met with a variety of reactions by fellow handicapped persons. In many ways it looks like I've made it in both the straight and the handicapped world, which makes me both an object of pride and envy. But whatever way one looks at ~~it~~ me, it is a misnomer. I am intelligent and well educated and to some have achieved a certain degree of success, but all these things are being threatened by a decreasing mobility in a profession that demands mobility. "Hire the handicapped--it's good business" is only a slogan as long as there is no way to get that job, if and when you find it.