

# Why A Non-Binding Resolution?

- Since Town Meeting does not have the authority to amend the parking ban, we wanted to foster public discourse and raise awareness as to how the ban adversely impacts lower income and disabled individuals without undermining the Select Board's jurisdiction..
- Wanted an opportunity to offer an informed blueprint regarding an eligibility criteria for an exemption program to the ban for qualified individuals experiencing financial and/or medical hardship.

# The Dilemma

- Many tenants have reported that realtors or landlords were misleading about the overnight parking ban and the availability of an off-street parking space, putting them in vulnerable positions after they moved here.
- Some landlords are charging extraneous and exorbitant parking fees on top of high rents--sometimes proposing these fees mid-lease on some tenants.
- Virtually all of the tenants who have reported issues of this nature to the Tenants for Livable Arlington are members of one or more marginalized demographic--women, people of color, immigrants, those with disabilities and many of lower or modest income.

# The Dilemma

- Car ownership is intimately tied to job security and economic/social mobility for lower income and working class people.
- Public transportation is underfunded, inadequate, and in many cases, continues to be non-compliant with the ADA.
- As such, redevelopment and zoning proposals in the Town that seek to reduce or eliminate off-street parking spaces while maintaining our current overnight on-street parking ban without exemptions has harmed some lower income and disabled folks who currently reside here and might discourage people from these demographics from relocating here.
- This puts these plans at odds with the Town's own diversity goals.

## What Does the Data Say?

A study by the Urban Institute, the University of Maryland and UCLA of 12,000 families in 10 major metro areas (including Boston) participating in two HUD programs--Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing and Welfare to Work Vouchers--found that *voucher recipients who owned automobiles were twice as likely to find a job and four times as likely to remain employed.*

The study also revealed that those who owned cars tended to live and remain in higher-opportunity neighborhoods—places with lower poverty rates, higher social status, stronger housing markets & schools, more green spaces, and lower health risks.

## Study Conclusion

Of their findings, the researchers stated in a *CityLab* guest column: “The importance of automobiles arises...because public transit systems in most metropolitan areas are slow, inconvenient, and lack sufficient metropolitan-wide coverage to rival the automobile.”

# Cars Ownership Programs that Help the Poor

- Good News Garage
- Vehicles for Change
- Goodwill Industries Wheels for Work
- Cars 4 Christmas
- Charity Cars

# Do These Programs Help the Poor?

The director of Vehicles for Change reported to *The Atlantic* that recipients who receive a car through their program get a job within a year and see an average annual income boost of \$7,000.

# Many jobs mandate cars

- Many jobs in the care industry open to those without Bachelor degrees that pay more competitive rates require ownership of a car, such as Nanny, Home Health Aide, Certified Peer Specialist, Therapeutic Mentor, etc.
- Many blue collar jobs in carpentry, construction, landscaping, etc. also require cars.

# Other studies and findings

- A recent Federal Reserve Board report found that “America's highly segregated and car-dependent cities and counties make it difficult for many workers to reach the facilities where the jobs are. And the jobs are increasingly in the suburbs...”
- A report released in January 2018 by the Federal Reserve Bank of Pennsylvania noted that “for residents without access to a car...[it] can be a formidable barrier to employment, hampering both an applicant's ability to apply for a job and an employed resident's ability to retain one.”

# Impacts on Survivors of Domestic Violence

A white paper compiled by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence stated “Access to a car is a major factor [for victims of domestic violence] in being able to obtain and sustain employment, in caring for children, and important in being able to maintain independence and safety. Even in areas with extensive mass-transit systems, studies have shown that less than half of entry-level jobs are accessible by public transit — two-thirds of new jobs are in the suburbs...”

# Impacts on Immigrants

“Latino immigrants report that transportation plays a role in decisions regarding whether to work and which jobs to accept. Indeed, workers with cars tend to make more money than those who commute by other means, and lack of access to [personal] transportation may constrain upward economic mobility and contribute to the perpetuation of poverty. For immigrants, this also means reducing the possibility for social assimilation among the first generation, and reducing the prospects for socioeconomic mobility for their children and grandchildren.” - American Immigration Council

# Impacts on Disabled

- The Boston Center Independent Living, one of the largest advocacy groups for people with disabilities in the Greater Boston Metro area, sued the MBTA in 2002 for not being compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In 2010, the independent judge monitoring the settlement asserted that though the MBTA has made progress toward accessibility, riders with disabilities still faced daily obstacles to using the public transit system. BCIL Executive Director Bill Henning has asserted that despite improvements, many obstacles remain in place for disabled folks using the T.

# MBTA's Internal Plan for Accessible Transit

- 84% of bus stops have at least one significant access barrier.
- 34 commuter rail stations are completely inaccessible.
- Many of the street-running Green Line stations are completely inaccessible, and every subway station in the system was found to have at least one serious access barrier.
- A significant backlog in sidewalk repairs means that even if the transit itself is accessible, there are no accessible routes to it from many residences in many towns/cities.

## How About Here in Arlington?

The predicament for reliable MBTA access for disabled folks may be particularly profound in Arlington as the *Boston Globe* reported just last year that two of the bus routes with the highest percentage of canceled trips were the 77 and 79, which serve our Town and connect it directly to the subway via the Red Line (at Alewife, Porter and Harvard)

## What Effects Does That Have on Our Access to Healthcare?

A 2012 survey of 698 low-income patients in a New York City suburb reported that patients who rode the bus to the doctor's office were twice as likely to miss appointments as patients who drove cars.

A 2013, a review published in the *Journal of Community Health* found that around 25 percent of lower-income patients have missed or rescheduled their appointments due to lack of [personal] transportation. The patients who reported issues with transportation also missed filling prescriptions more than twice as often as patients without that same problem.

# What About the Environment?

- Lower income people already have a much lower carbon footprint on average and disproportionately use public transit at much higher levels than middle and upper income individuals.
- Emissions from private car use by lower income people is very small compared to other emissions sources both within and in addition to the transportation sector.
- The parking ban will likely displace people, causing them to move farther away from public transit routes and walkable communities where they will be forced to drive more, not less.

# Can't People Ride Bikes Instead?

- People who ride [bikes] in metro areas are mostly wealthy/white.
- In 2012, low-income respondents reported spending nearly four hours more in weekly commute times compared to higher-income respondents in the same area.
- In 2013, respondents reported more than 30 barriers to cycling or walking: physical safety (32.6 percent), distance (30 percent) and comfort/cold/sweating (25.4 percent) were the most common objections. Other barriers included the difficulty of carrying bulky items, work attire, not knowing how to ride, theft risk, poor health or disability & the slower speed.

Their conclusion: “If transportation systems should speak to the reality and desires of communities they serve, our findings suggest policies might need to do a better job of listening to the poor.”

And that: “excessively denigrating automobiles might hinder cycling adoption and even poverty reduction goals. Yes, there are many ecological and social costs to car-dependent transport. But poor people face enormous multimodal challenges that should be considered in conjunction with such concerns...Reducing reliance on cars remains important for transportation systems, but we must also seriously consider...the most vulnerable members of society.”

# What can be done?

The Town can consider an exemption program to the overnight on-street parking ban for those who are experiencing either financial and/or medical hardship (whether temporary or permanent) who meet a certain pre-determined set of criteria and who lack adequate, accessible and/or affordable off-street parking options with no need of a public hearing and that is subject to annual review.

# What Would Be That Criteria?

- Automatic eligibility for those enrolled in one or more of the following programs: SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, and/or a housing voucher holder (with proof of enrollment required, i.e., award letter, payment stub)  
OR
- Possession of a handicap placard or plates  
OR
- Income is at or less than 80% Area Median Income (AMI), with proof of income required (one month's pay stubs, most recent tax return receipt, letter from employer, etc.)

# Other Logistics

- Only 1 exemption per Driver's license/car registration
- Proof of lack of parking (lease, landlord letter, etc.)
- Sticker with month/year of review (similar to car inspection sticker)
- Charge a nominal fee (\$25-35/yr with possible discount or waiver for very low income individual & those w/disability)
- Online/paper application (which can be mailed in or dropped off)

# Far)

- The Diversity Taskforce
- The Boston Center for Independent Living
- The Disability Policy Consortium
- The MA Chapter of the Marfan Foundation
- The MA/New England EDS/CTD Support Group
- The Arlington Chronic Pain Support Group/Arlington  
MA Chapter of the American Pain Association

## **Proposed Eligibility Criteria for Exemption\*\*:**

- Automatic eligibility for those enrolled in one or more of the following programs: SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, and/or a housing voucher holder (with proof of enrollment required, i.e., award letter, payment stub)

OR

- Possession of a handicap placard or plates (Note: will exempt those who already have an on-street designated handicap parking space from the ban)

OR

- Income is at or less than 80% Area Median Income (AMI), with proof of income required (one month's pay stubs, most recent tax return receipt, letter from employer, etc.), to tie it in with the Town's inclusionary zoning definition of what qualifies as affordable housing

AND

- Proof of lack of off-street parking options (copy of lease, landlord letter, notice of parking fee, or in the case of disability, doctor letter supporting access needs if there is an off-street space but it is inadequate)

## **Other Logistics:**

- No hearing required
- Only 1 exemption allowed per driver's license & car registration
- Sticker displayed with month/year of its issue (similar to a car inspection sticker)
- May charge a nominal fee of \$25 - \$35/year to defray administrative costs (with possible discount or waiver of fee for those who are very low income--i.e., on SNAP, SSI or making at or below 20-30% AMI--and those with disability placard/plates)
- Available as both a digital and hardcopy paper application that can be either submitted online, mailed in or dropped off at Town Hall during business hours
- Identities of applicants will not be available to public

*\*\* This criteria was formulated in consultation with representatives of the Town's Planning Department and the Parking Implementation and Governance Committee and is based on the precedent of pre-existing state hardship exemption programs and other parking pass waiver programs in other municipalities in the United States.*

Thanks! I am attaching the materials here. Can I include link to some articles as well to be added? If so, here are a few I would like to include:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/07/how-car-ownership-helps-the-working-poor-get-ahead/431160/>

<https://www.yourarlington.com/easyblog/entry/29-town-parking/2513-parking-081918.html>

Sincerely,

Laura Kiesel

Cars are often integral for job security and economic/social mobility for lower income and working class individuals and families, as well as to the autonomy and safety of disabled people. This is not just a theory, but it well supported by the best available data and the conclusions of those researchers who analyze these issues.

**INCOME:** Recent collaborative research conducted by the Urban Institute, the University of Maryland and UCLA of two Department of Housing and Urban Development demonstration programs--Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing and Welfare to Work Vouchers--found that housing voucher recipients with cars tended to live and remain in higher-opportunity neighborhoods—places with lower poverty rates, higher social status, stronger housing markets and public school systems, green spaces and lower health risks. Cars were also found to be associated with improved neighborhood satisfaction and better employment outcomes, *with those voucher recipients who owned automobiles twice as likely to find a job and four times as likely to remain employed.* The analysis was of 12,000 families from 10 major cities, including Boston. As reported in *The Atlantic* that same year, “Recent research suggests that, particularly for single moms...owning a car can mean access to better jobs and safer neighborhoods.” 1.

Of their findings at Urban Institute, the researchers stated in a *CityLab* column: “The importance of automobiles arises...because public transit systems in most metropolitan areas are slow, inconvenient, and lack sufficient metropolitan-wide coverage to rival the automobile.” 2.

According to a *Business Insider* article reporting recent Federal Reserve Board findings, “America's highly segregated and car-dependent cities and counties make it difficult for many workers to reach the facilities where the jobs are. And the jobs are increasingly in the suburbs...” 3. And a report released in January 2018 by the Federal Reserve Bank of Pennsylvania noted that “for residents without access to a car...[it] can be a formidable barrier to employment, hampering both an applicant's ability to apply for a job and an employed resident's ability to retain one.” 4.

According to a paper prepared by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence entitled *Helping Survivors of Domestic Violence Get Where They Need to Go*: “Lack of transportation is a major problem for victims of domestic violence...Evidence is mounting that the only effective transportation for single working parents is the use of a car. Access to a car is a major factor in being able to obtain and sustain employment, a major factor in caring for children, and important in being able to maintain independence and safety. Even in areas with extensive mass-transit systems, studies have shown that *less than half of entry-level jobs are accessible by public transit — two-thirds of new jobs are in the suburbs...Low-income workers are in fact not less in need of cars than higher-income workers —* many have children who must be delivered to day care, and many entry-level jobs require...hours when buses do not run regularly or are not located on mass transit routes. It is not hard to prove that access to transportation is an important need; in fact, it is critical to helping battered women maintain their independence and safety.” 5.

According to the American Immigration Council: “Latino immigrants report that transportation plays a role in decisions regarding whether to work and which jobs to accept. Indeed, workers with cars tend to make more money than those who commute by other means, and lack of access to transportation may constrain upward economic mobility and contribute to the perpetuation of poverty. For immigrants, this also means reducing the possibility for social assimilation among the first generation, and reducing the prospects for socioeconomic mobility for their children and grandchildren. For communities, transportation barriers experienced by Latino immigrants result in a portion of the workforce experiencing spatial and temporal constraints, which reduces the potential income of the Latino immigrants and their ability to contribute to the local economy through taxes, consumer spending, and other multifaceted ways.....”

Due to the dispersed spatial layout of U.S. communities, which perpetuates the dependence of U.S. society on automobiles, most institutions and businesses assume that clients, customers, and participants have access to private vehicles. For this reason, scholars focusing on various social institutions also find that transportation barriers pose significant barriers to participation in organizations. Scholars who focus on the health system identify transportation as a limitation that prevents disadvantaged individuals, including Latino immigrants, from accessing medical care and free public health events, thus reducing the use of preventive medical care and increasing risks of illness and more costly visits to the emergency room. Additionally, researchers have found that transportation barriers prevent immigrants from attending community college classes and participating in events at their children’s schools. Moreover, transportation barriers reduce the enrollment rates and participation of children of Latino immigrants in early childhood education programs.” 6.

**DISABILITY:** The Boston Center Independent Living, one of the largest advocacy groups for people with disabilities in the Greater Boston Metro area, sued the MBTA in 2002 for not being compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The suit led to a settlement in 2006 to make its systems more accessible. However, in 2010, the independent judge monitoring the settlement asserted that though the MBTA has made progress toward accessibility, riders with disabilities still faced daily obstacles to using the public transit system. 7. BCIL Executive Director Bill Henning has affirmed that despite improvements, many obstacles remain in place for disabled folks using the T. The predicament for reliable MBTA access for disabled folks may be particularly profound in Arlington as the *Boston Globe* reported just last year that two of the bus routes with the highest percentage of canceled trips were the 77 and 79, which serve our Town and connect it directly to the subway via the Red Line (at Alewife, Porter and Harvard). 8.

“A 2012 survey of 698 low-income patients in a New York City suburb reported that patients who rode the bus to the doctor’s office were twice as likely to miss appointments as patients who drove cars. 9. A 2013, a review published in the *Journal of Community Health* found that around 25 percent of lower-income patients have missed or rescheduled their appointments due to lack of personal transportation. The patients who reported issues with transportation also missed filling prescriptions more than twice as often as patients without that same problem.” 10.

Under the federal and state Fair Housing Acts, disabled tenants have rights to accessible parking. Under the FHAA, municipalities are usually expected to make reasonable exemptions for residents to their zoning ordinances, especially if or when exclusionary zoning bylaws conflict with disability access. For example, in a 1997 court case, the City of Manchester, New Hampshire was found at fault for failing to provide reasonable accommodations under the FHAA by denying a proposed zoning variance requested by individuals with disabilities who wanted permission to build accessible parking spaces in front of their home at which they could park. 11.

1. “Driving to Opportunity: Understanding the Links among Transportation Access, Residential Outcomes, and Economic Opportunity for Housing Voucher Recipients,” Urban Institute, 2014.  
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/driving-opportunity-understanding-links-among-transportation-access-residential-outcomes-and-economic-opportunity-housing-voucher-recipients>
2. “How Access to Cars Could Help The Poor,” *CityLab*, 2014;  
<https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2014/04/why-poor-still-need-cars/8769/>
3. <https://www.businessinsider.com/lack-of-transport-is-a-major-obstacle-to-employment-for-americas-poor-2018-1>
4. <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/community-development/publications/special-reports/public-transit-and-job-access-in-northeastern-pennsylvania/getting-to-work-on-time.pdf>
5. [http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Transportation\\_TA.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Transportation_TA.pdf)
6. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/living-car-culture-without-license>
7. [http://archive.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/12/07/mbta\\_earns\\_mixed\\_grades\\_on\\_accessibility\\_in\\_review\\_of\\_ada\\_settlement/](http://archive.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/12/07/mbta_earns_mixed_grades_on_accessibility_in_review_of_ada_settlement/)
8. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/04/06/these-are-mbta-bus-routes-with-most-cancelled-trips/ZEkw8PfBnZLkFv14XCIPqK/story.html>
9. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22512007>
10. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23543372>
11. <http://www.southwestada.org/html/topical/housing/housing-parking.html>



# Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group

The Diversity Task Group (DTG) is a group of Arlington residents committed to making the town community inclusive, fostering awareness and education, and creating safe spaces where all voices are welcome and supported. DTG ascribes to a concept of diversity that includes people with low income and persons with disabilities. The DTG has heard concerns from people in the town that the overnight parking ban has a disproportionately large impact on low income and disabled town residents. The parking ban interferes with the quality and management of life possessed by people with disabilities. As a group of town residents seeking to educate and advocate for the supportive treatment across all kinds of diversity, a motion was made for “the DTG to support the creation of a warrant article for a culturally sensitive approach to overnight parking exemptions in Arlington.” This was seconded and approved January 14, 2019. DTG supports the town examining the possibility of accommodation for Arlington neighbors with disabilities and low income specifically pertaining to the overnight parking law.

Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group

Michaiah Healy  
Chair



January 23, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

The Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) is a frontline civil rights organization led by people with disabilities that advocates to eliminate discrimination, isolation, and segregation by providing advocacy and services in order to enhance the independence of people with disabilities. Over 4,000 people annually benefit from our services, and we have a caseload of 71 people from Arlington.

We recently have been informed of challenges that individuals with disabilities may face because of Arlington's overnight parking ban. While BCIL recognizes the societal necessity of supporting a range of safety measures and public transportation options, especially ones that are environmentally friendly, we also hope that all policies will consider the ability of disabled individuals to move about their community, something fundamental to integration, general wellbeing, and civic participation.

Public transportation is typically a point-to-point service, with much focus on getting to and from larger cities such as Boston and Cambridge. But most people also travel to places off of main travel routes, something that can be most challenging for many persons with disabilities. In many cases a car is not only the best option, it may be the only option, and restricting access to vehicles may restrict free movement within the community. Services such as The Ride work for very structured situations—they are from one location to another and require a 24-hour reservation, which is how people may live relative to a doctor's appointment or getting to and from a job. But it's a service that is severely confining in terms of spontaneity, errand running, and sudden need, things that characterize so many lives these days. Trips for family visits, shopping, entertainment, schools and classes, and many other such things that mark a vibrant life and a livable municipality are significantly restricted by narrowed transportation options.

BCIL hopes the concerns of disability advocates regarding automobile regulation will be given a full hearing.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Bill Henning*

Bill Henning

Executive Director

Advocacy, Service, Action!

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# Disability Policy Consortium

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Arlington Select Board  
Arlington Town Hall  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02476;

Dear Chair Dunn and Members of the Arlington Select Board,

Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) is an advocacy and research organization representing people with disabilities across the state. We work with policymakers at the federal, state, and municipal levels to promote universally-designed public policy that promotes independence and autonomy for people with disabilities. We are writing to you in regard to the Town of Arlington's overnight parking ban, and the proposed reduction in off-street parking capacity in the town.

DPC strongly believes in promoting transit access for people with disabilities; as an institutional member of the state's Riders Transportation Access Group, we are engaging with policymakers and community members to make the MBTA as accessible as possible. However, although it contributes significantly to the independence of thousands of people with disabilities, our public transit system as it currently is does not provide sufficient access and mobility by itself. According to the MBTA's internal Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI), 84% of bus stops have at least one significant access barrier. 34 commuter rail stations are completely inaccessible. Many of the street-running Green Line stations are totally inaccessible, and every subway station in the system was found to have at least one serious access barrier. Furthermore, a significant backlog in sidewalk repairs means that in many Massachusetts municipalities, even if the transit itself is accessible, there are no accessible routes to it from many residences. As for The RIDE, while it is a key lifeline service, the need to book service 24 hours in advance, the limited service area, and the "premium" fares for longer trips mean it is not always a viable option.

For many members of our community, the ability to drive and to park is therefore critical for the kind of independence that non-disabled people enjoy—the freedom to move through the world independently, to make spontaneous decisions about where we go and what to do, and to arrive at our destinations in safety and comfort. Moreover, because people with disabilities are disproportionately low-income, and because single-family homes in Massachusetts are predominantly inaccessible, people with disabilities are less likely to own or rent property with personal driveways.

By making reasonable accommodations, it is perfectly possible to pursue policies that promote both accessibility and transit-oriented development. Allowing holders of disability placards to park overnight on the street would allow for access while preserving off-street space for more valuable uses. Reducing off-street parking minimums while maintaining or increasing the number of off-street accessible parking spaces (formerly known as handicapped parking spaces) would promote the use of transit and bicycles by those who can without penalizing those who cannot. Finally, prioritizing sidewalk repair along major pedestrian corridors and increasing the availability of seating at bus stops would make your existing transit network more usable by people with disabilities. Together, we can make our municipalities environmentally friendly and accessible for all.

Regards,  
Colin Killick  
Deputy Director  
Disability Policy Consortium  
11 Dartmouth St, Suite 301  
Malden, MA 02148

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Dear Arlington Select Board Members,

As a longtime disability and medical advocate for those with rare health disorders, the President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Marfan Foundation, and the Founder and Co-Leader of the Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and CTD (Connective Tissue Disease) New England/Massachusetts Support Group, I am writing you today concerning your Town's stringent overnight on-street parking ban and implore you to consider an exemption program for those experiencing medical hardship who lack adequate off-street parking options.

Though it may not seem so at first glance, this ban is potentially--if not already actively--harmful to those of us with certain disabling and painful medical conditions who require cars to maintain function in the day-to-day grind of modern life and meet our basic living needs, whether that be running errands, tending to our children, or attending our many medical appointments (something which is a very regular occurrence for those of us with rare disorders). Unfortunately, the current state of our public transit, even for those living in close proximity to bus stops and T stations, is still quite inaccessible to many of us living with disability and not a practical alternative for those of us with extreme pain who are prone to injury. Connective tissue disease is characterized by the propensity toward injury. As such, something as simple as being bumped into by another passenger on the train or tripping over a crack in the sidewalk or step on the bus can lead to fractures or subluxations that can take weeks or months to heal. Bicycle riding is also something that is simply not possible for many of us with painful and vulnerable medical conditions, or even when it is, it may not be on a sustained or frequent basis. In light of this, many of us depend on our cars as a matter of survival. Ownership of a personal automobile can make a significant difference in the ability to hold down a job (for those of us who still work), ability to access both the routine and emergency medical care crucial to our health and well-being, and ultimately, to maintain a minimum of independence.

If those of us cannot reside in an area because we do not have legal parking options for the cars we need to secure our access to the services that enable us to live as autonomous and healthy lives as possible given our physical limitations, then we are basically being excluded from and disenfranchised in those communities. Therefore, I hope the Town of Arlington will reconsider its parking ban and make allowances for those us with extenuating medical circumstances. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Rodis, MBA  
National Disability and Medical Advocate for Rare Disorders  
President-Massachusetts Chapter of the Marfan Foundation  
Founder and Co-leader-Ehlers-Danlos and CTD New England/Massachusetts Support Group

Monday, February 4, 2019

Dear Select Board Members of the Town of Arlington,

My name is Cindy Steinberg and I am the National Director of Policy and Advocacy at the U.S. Pain Foundation and Chair of the Policy Council of the Massachusetts Pain Initiative. I serve on a number of state-based and national pain-related oversight committees, task forces and commissions. I am also the founder and leader of the Arlington, MA Chapter of the American Chronic Pain Association, a free chronic pain support group which meets monthly at the Robbins Library in Arlington the second Friday of every month. Our group has been meeting continuously year round for 18 years. Though we have members who attend our support group from all over the greater metro area and state, many of our members are local residents of the Town.

I have recently been alerted to the adverse impacts of the Town's overnight on-street parking ban on some individuals with chronic pain and disability, and concerns that recent housing development plans that are being considered have proposed minimizing off-street parking space availability in favor of encouraging more prospective residents to use public transit or bicycles to travel.

As someone with chronic pain who has been leading meetings for those with chronic pain for nearly two decades, I can both personally and professionally attest that taking public transit is not always (or even usually) a practical option for many of us. For some, it may not even be feasible at all. Those who live with moderate to severe chronic pain on a daily basis tend to experience serious limitations to their mobility. Even something as simple as walking a few blocks can be excruciating, so unless a public transit stop is located right outside their doorway and is taking them directly to their intended destination, they may not be able to access it. Even for those located on direct public transit routes, taking crowded buses and trains where seats may not be available and that can take much longer than a car trip, can seriously exacerbate pain and use up what little energy the person has to function that day or week. Most of our members cannot ride bicycles, so that is also not an option for many with severe chronic pain.

For those of us with chronic pain, cars can enable us to function in ways that many take for granted--allowing us to attend social events (and leave suddenly if needed), run errands, or even make it possible for those of us who are still employed to continue working. Without access to cars, many of us would lead more socially isolated and disenfranchised lives than we already do due to our condition. As such, I believe the Town should allow an exemption program to the overnight parking ban for those experiencing medical hardship who do not have access to off-street parking. In doing this, the Town will be advancing its own goals of being an inclusive municipality that values compassion. It will be sending a clear message that it welcomes residents who have chronic pain and disability and does not wish to set up barriers for them to live in Arlington.

I thank you for your consideration of this request and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy Steinberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Steinberg