

Submitted Testimony

SB 5218 Complex rehab. products/tax

Ways & Means

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Our mission at Team Gleason is to improve life for people living with ALS by delivering innovative technology and equipment, as well as providing and empowering an improved life experience. A primary focus of that mission is to empower people with the ability to effectively use Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) products, as well as other critical equipment and technology. We have helped over 30,000 people across the United States and many of them in my home state of Washington.

With that in mind, we are often called to advocate for issues that create barriers to accessing CRT, equipment, and associated support services. In the past decade, our team and I have helped pass two federal laws to ensure access to speech generating devices, as well as working toward other coverage issues where access is limited for those in the disability and chronically ill community who need these assistive CRT tools the most.

While we provide this critical equipment to many individuals when asked because coverage or taxes create an undue burden, our small organization should not carry the burden when there could be a legislative remedy. We are writing to encourage you to cosponsor and pass S-5218 in light of the following:

1. Sales tax on medically necessary equipment limits access to products and services for individuals with disabilities.
2. CRT includes medically necessary and individually configured manual and power wheelchairs, seating and positioning systems, and other adaptive equipment such as standing devices and gait trainers. The children and adults who require CRT have disabilities such as ALS, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, and traumatic brain injury.
3. CRT is utilized by a small percentage of individuals with disabilities. Therefore, the fiscal impact to the State would be minimal (\$2-4 Million per Ways and Means) while increasing access to critical equipment for individuals with complex medical needs.

CRT also provides increased function, independence, and access to the community for individuals with disabilities. We would also like to acknowledge the critical role adequate access to CRT plays in keeping other state healthcare costs down. The proper provision of CRT through qualified suppliers reduces medical complications, clinical interventions, hospitalizations, institutionalizations, as well as the need for caregiver assistance and other services through added independence.

Thank you for consideration of this important legislation to better serve the people of Washington State by removing unnecessary barriers to CRT access.