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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Moshe Bialac.

For purposes of identification only, I work for the Nevada AFLCIO as the Statewide Job Coordinator, participating in Rapid Responses Statewide for both union and non union workers. I am also considered a resource to Nevada Unions when it comes to accommodation, working with employers, unions and workers where collective bargaining is involved. The travels that I and my service dog make across this state and country are extensive, I have encountered ideal to horrific situations with regards to the disabled and their service dogs.

I have participated in many committees here in the State of Nevada from sitting on the Private Industry Councils to acting as a regular substitute on the State Workforce Investment Board, representing both organized labor and the people with disabilities. I was also on the board of directors for the Nevada Association of the Handicapped. For the National AFL-CIO, I have chaired and participated in many committees and caucuses on the rights of disabled workers, again on both a regional and national level. I am also the first and only Nevadan to be appointed to the President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities.

For my own union I am a regional representative for the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees with a jurisdiction including the states of Arizona, California, Hawaii and Nevada. In addition to those duties I am considered a resource to that organization also as to accommodation and collective bargaining.

I have researched and made available to the State of Nevada important information on the beginning of a service dog school here, with the Nevada State AFLCIO making a commitment of support and participation. In this process I have met and worked with representatives of Delta Society, Assistance Dogs International and various prison programs, all non-guide dog, service animals training groups.

I am writing today to voice concern over comments made in testimony to this committee and to provide the committee additional information regarding the licensing and certification of service dogs and their trainers.

The majority of the testimony I have heard so far has been from one single group, the blind and vision-impaired. However, the community of people with disabilities is very diverse and the needs of one segment of the population are not the same as the needs of other segments of our community. I would like to bring the perspective of other segments of our community to this discussion.

First, I want to remind the committee that more than any other group, people with disabilities are most likely to live in poverty. As a result, the economic impact of

any legislative changes that affect people with disabilities must be given extra scrutiny and special consideration. To increase any economic burden on people with disabilities can be especially devastating. I believe this bill does that by making service dogs more difficult and more expensive to procure.

As you have heard, the sight-impaired community has long been recognized for their expertise due to because of their use of service dogs to accommodate war injured blind. Originally the breed used was the Shepard since most of these early rehabilitation efforts took place in Europe. Then, with the Americanization of accommodation, Labradors came into greater use. Today in Las Vegas you can see a larger variety of breeds, even a beautiful red Doberman, being used as guide dogs.

The training of a service dog is unique to the disabilities the dog will help accommodate. For example, I use dogs mainly for draft work – my dog helps pull me around to increase my mobility. Therefore, a larger breed than the traditional guide dog is necessary for me because of the physical work load the dog endures. My dog is trained when encountering a step up or down, to make that step on command either by pulling my wheelchair over or in a support stance that we both can anticipate to give me needed support should I need to stand. I am depending on him as a walking cane, if you will. That same step could mean little or nothing to a dog trained to provide hearing support or seizure alert. Taking that step first would mean failure to a guide dog.

Not only does the training vary but so does the breed. There has already been testimony from guide dog puppy trainers for out of state schools that have described the breeds they work with. Such breeds would be of little use to me as mobility impaired person, as I am inclined to use working breed dogs, long established across the world as being able to pull and support. A hearing impaired person may be inclined to use Terrier breeds as their alertness would compliment their job description. People who need seizure alert support would look to an entirely different breed. A seizure alert dog is a unique and valuable asset. No one breed displays the empathy that these treasures display for their partners: an ability not only to sense and alert their partner to an oncoming seizure but also an ability to go get help. (Something that would be impossible if the dog was required by law to be leashed.)

Not only these disabilities but many more require help from service dogs. For instance one of my multiple disabilities is MS. Multiple Sclerosis effects millions of Americans, but not always in the same way. Where my interest in support from my service dog is in draft, another person with MS might want retrieval, or sight, or hearing, or just walking support.

My point here is that to regulate so many different uses that a services dog may be required to provide, you as a committee need to hear from more than just one or two kinds of users of service dogs.

Additionally, you should know that there are no providers or schools here in the state of Nevada. The puppy training groups we see all through this state are for out of state, special interest schools. To obtain these services, Nevadans need to be put on long waiting list, sometimes waiting years for service. They also have to have the finances to afford the out-of-state travel and requirements to qualify for these dogs and as I said before, many people with disabilities just don't have access to these resources. Some schools require weeks of attendance at their out of state facilities which is quite expensive.

People like myself have to rely on ourselves and outside local support within the state for help in finding and training service animals. I am fortunate that I was able to afford to import a breed of Sheppard that has the size and strength to fill my needs. Before him I had Mojo, a Rottwieller, who served me for many years in all those meetings among hundreds of people and their service dogs. I was also able to afford to send my current dog, Wakanda, to school in the State of Washington for almost two years before I got him. This was an expense I bore personally with no assistance. Even so, when Wakanda got here, his training was basic and he then had to be trained further to my specific needs and commands.

I use a trainer that has been here in Nevada professionally for almost 30 years. If you were to go to the State of Nevada Employment website you would find that Dog Trainers are not in high demand here. So to find an experienced trainer in state is difficult. Therefore, many good local animal trainers train dogs for many purposes in order to remain economically viable. My trainer trains from basic obedience to competition level obedience and agility. He also trains private security dogs that work explosive, drugs and personal protection, and, of course, he trains service dogs. In my profession, dealing with a diverse public, you can imagine the extensive non-aggressive training that is required of a dog that works so much in the public. For example, Mojo was the first animal to my knowledge to be given the rights to the Nevada State Assembly Floor. There is even one State Assembly person who can testify to their Bulldog energetically trying to get personal with Mojo while he sat and watched in astonishment. Mojo and now, Wakanda are great examples of large breed dogs who are well trained through a variety of sources.

Federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act took much of this into consideration when it allowed for owner trained animals. Requiring no paperwork that would describe or justify an individuals disability or needed accommodation to be shown to any lay person on demand without cause.

Finally, I should point out that many people with disabilities use service animals other than dogs. Since my expertise and experience only applies to dogs, I have kept my comments to service dogs. However, the committee may also wish to

work with people who specialize in other kinds of service animals as it considers this or similar legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. This bill on the legislation and the resulting restrictions on the training and procuring of service dogs will place an undue economic burden on people with disabilities. Leash requirements can hamper a service dog under certain conditions. Breed selection can certainly restrict the use of capable dogs. But foremost, if you are going to regulate trainers you must have trainers involved, not just end-users and certainly not just users from any select group. I urge you to reconsider the legislation before you until such time as you can have heard from all the affected parties.

Thank you.

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