



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your Constituent,

Name:

Email:

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[Unlockingbarriers-sc.org](http://Unlockingbarriers-sc.org)

#BarrierFreeSC



## **Barriers to Independence for South Carolinians with Disabilities**

### **Public Access Barriers**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has mandated the accessibility of all programs, activities, and services provided to the public. Despite this mandate, the disability community is still without equal access due to physical, attitudinal, and programmatic barriers.

In a recent study, only two qualified ADA Coordinators were identified across 78 SC state agencies, resulting in a higher likelihood of unintentional discrimination against people with disabilities due to agencies having inaccessible programs, activities, and services.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** Measuring State Agency ADA Coordinators and their qualifications should be part of the House Oversight Committee review process.

South Carolina has no State ADA Coordinator to provide structure and support across state agencies.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** A State ADA Coordinator should be appointed to safeguard South Carolina from the risk of litigation

but most importantly to promote inclusive practices.

## **Employment Barriers**

Despite a South Carolina unemployment rate below 4%, over 67% of working-age residents with disabilities do not participate in the labor market.

The State of South Carolina offers no hiring targets or incentives for hiring people with disabilities. State Government is missing an opportunity to lead the way as a model employer of people with disabilities.

Unlocking the Barrier: South Carolina State Government must lead in employment of people with disabilities by example. It is time for our State to set and achieve disability utilization goals.

Over 4,000 South Carolinians with disabilities are limited to settings where they may make less than a dollar per hour.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** SC must examine how sub-minimum wage practices limit employment potential and encourage long-term dependence on government assistance. Wage practices should affirm the equal value of employees with disabilities and increase opportunities for self-sufficiency.

People with disabilities are not prepared for or provided with equal opportunities to secure integrated and competitive employment.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** All agencies serving people with disabilities with public funds should focus on competitive,

integrated employment as the first and preferred option (Employment First). An Employment First Commission could provide recommendations to the state on how to improve current practices.

## **Housing Barriers**

Across the state, there is a scarcity of affordable housing, and additional barriers further limit access for people with disabilities. As a result, our community makes up 47.5% of the homeless population.

Many rental properties do not accept housing vouchers, a practice that could result in disability discrimination.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** South Carolina must incentivize acceptance of Housing Choice Vouchers.

When homeowners or their family members acquire disabilities, the high costs of home modification have the power to derail the American Dream.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** A tax incentive for home modifications can lessen the financial burden of ownership for people with disabilities.

New construction standards for single-family housing units do not require accessibility for the disability community or family they would visit.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** The state should require 50% of new homes projects meet simple standards for visitable homes.

Visitability (Type C accessible dwelling unit) standards already exist in the building code making this transition a simple one.

## **Transportation Barriers**

Transportation is the key to independence and community participation. People with disabilities are twice as likely to have inadequate transportation, making it difficult to take advantage of economic and recreational opportunities afforded to the community.

Environmental barriers, like crumbling sidewalks, missing curb cuts, and hard to read signs may deny access to multimodal transportation. The Department of Transportation lacks adequate design standards to be used statewide.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** Building accessible, multi-modal roads that comply with Complete Streets standards would create greater access to walking, biking, and public transportation, offering SC residents with disabilities more opportunities to work and shop in their local communities.

There are 27 Public Transit Authorities across South Carolina, but these programs lack the resources to promote the accessible services they provide.

**Unlocking the Barrier:** The SC Department of Transportation (SCDOT) should be encouraged to lead a campaign to educate the community about the existing accessible public transportation options throughout the state.