



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

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September 10, 2018

Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Secretary Pollack,

Two years ago, we wrote to you on behalf of our constituents in the four Western Massachusetts counties, who were facing an unfair burden in obtaining handicap placards from the Registry of Motor Vehicles. They waited months after applying to receive their placards in the mail, while being informed that the process would be expedited if they chose to pick up the placards from the Boston RMV. We were assured, in a response from Registrar Erin Deveney dated February 1, 2016, that there is an expedited process for temporary handicap placard applications which had not been followed by RMV branches in Western Massachusetts, and that the RMV would take steps to re-educate staff on that process.

It has since come to our attention that the problem has not been remedied, and it appears that there is no process in place to allow residents of Western Massachusetts to obtain temporary handicap placards in a timely or reasonable manner.

In a July 19, 2018 report by New England Public Radio entitled "Handicapped Parking Permits Come With A Long Wait In Western Massachusetts," Peter Acker of Pelham explains that he was told at the RMV branch in Greenfield that he would have his temporary placard in "about a month." The story also reports that a recording on the RMV's medical affairs hotline indicates that the RMV has "processed all applications for temporary disabled parking placards received as of May 26" — meaning that someone who applied for a placard in June could still be waiting for one.

As far as we understand, it remains the case that Commonwealth residents living in the Greater Boston area can receive their placards in a timelier manner because the applications are processed centrally in the RMV's Haymarket office in Boston. Residents can apply for a handicap placard in person at the Boston RMV and receive it the same day. However, the suggestion that already-handicapped residents of Western Massachusetts should endure a taxing round-trip drive of 150 miles or more to Boston in order to obtain a handicap placard is insensitive, to say the least, and displays a shocking indifference to the reason they need the placards in the first place.

It is disturbing to us that we were assured this problem would be fixed only to discover, two years later, that it has not been. Moreover, this is clearly a pattern in which residents of Western Massachusetts continue to be treated as second-class citizens with unequal access to the state resources enjoyed by residents of Eastern Massachusetts.

Therefore, we are writing to strongly urge that the RMV implement the expedited process that Registrar Deveney assured us was in place for applicants seeking temporary handicap placards. If it is the process, and not RMV staff oversight, that is resulting in application delays for residents of Western Massachusetts, we urge you to change the process immediately to accommodate Western Massachusetts applicants. Alternatively, we look forward to hearing your recommendations for legislative solutions that will ensure all residents of the Commonwealth are treated equally in RMV application processes.

Moreover, we request a concrete plan for how this problem will ultimately be solved. We would also appreciate an explanation for the apparent discrepancy in what we were previously told by Registrar Deveney and the fact that the problem we sought to address two years ago persists.

Thank you very much for your timely attention to this matter.

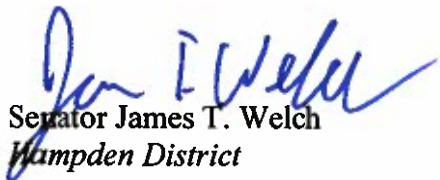
Sincerely,



Senator Eric P. Lesser
First Hampden & Hampshire District



Senator Anne M. Gobi
Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire & Middlesex District



Senator James T. Welch
Hampden District



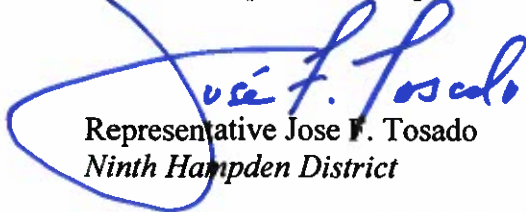
Senator Adam G. Hinds
Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin & Hampden District



Senator Donald F. Humason, Jr.
Second Hampden & Hampshire District



Representative Brian M. Ashe
Second Hampden District



Representative Jose F. Tosado
Ninth Hampden District



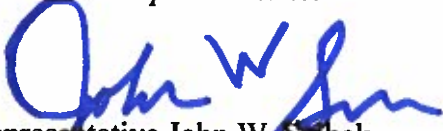
Representative Smitty Pignatelli
Fourth Berkshire District



Representative Bud L. Williams
Eleventh Hampden District



Representative Stephen Kulik
First Franklin District



Representative John W. Selbak
Second Hampshire District



Representative Solomon Goldstein-Rose
Third Hampshire District



Representative Paul W. Mark
Second Berkshire District



Representative Carlos González
Tenth Hampden District

CC: Governor Charles Baker
Registrar Erin Deveney, Registry of Motor Vehicles