

To Whom it May Concern,

As a longtime disability and medical advocate for those with rare health disorders, the CEO and President of the Connective Tissue Coalition, past 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 Newton's stringent overnight on-street parking ban. 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 city of Newton will repeal its parking ban and make Newton a more inclusive and compassionate city.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Rodis, MBA

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National Disability and Medical Advocate for Rare Disorders

Founder and Co-leader-Ehlers-Danlos and CTD New England/Massachusetts Support Group

Former President-Massachusetts Chapter of the Marfan Foundation