



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**JIMMY  
ANDERSON**  
47TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

February 8, 2024

Testimony on Assembly Bill 904

Good morning Chairman Tusler and fellow members of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary, and thank you for hearing testimony on Assembly Bill 904, which I introduced with Representative Steffen and Senator Bradley.

Government information is a vital resource to all residents, whether people are seeking information on applications, licensing, permits, voting information, or any of the helpful or necessary information you can find on government websites. We must ensure that these resources are equally accessible to everyone. Few realize that what they perceive as normal, everyday websites can contain barriers for people with disabilities. Assembly Bill 904 aims to remedy that by requiring that all state government websites are designed and maintained so as to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Those with disabilities may rely on certain assistive technology, such as captioning, voice recognition, screen readers, or speech-to-text. There also may be other barriers such as poor color contrast and lack of keyboard navigability. State websites need to take these factors into account to ensure that online information is truly accessible to all Wisconsinites.

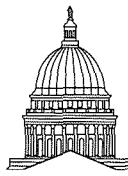
AB904 requires that state websites adhere to the most recent guidelines published by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative or its successor. These guidelines, currently known as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), follow best practices for maintaining accessible websites, and would ensure that all Wisconsinites are freely able to use and access state resources.

We worked in conjunction with Disability Rights Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired in drafting this bill. Both groups support the bill and will testify in favor.

The fiscal estimate, prepared by DOA, lists the cost as "indeterminate." However, the agency does note that they believe the work can be "absorbed by existing staffing and expenditure authority."

It is important to note that this bill would be complementary to requirements already in federal statutes under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which states that those with a disability should have equal opportunity to benefit from "services, programs, or activities of" state and local government.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in front of the committee today. I will be happy to take any questions committee members might have.



**JULIAN BRADLEY**  
WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

**Assembly Bill 904**  
**Assembly Committee on Judiciary**  
**Thursday, February 8, 2024**

Thank you to Chairman Tusler and members of the committee for accepting my written testimony on Assembly Bill 904 (AB 904).

Over the last three decades, many transactions, including those involving the State of Wisconsin, have shifted to being conducted on-line. For many, this has made paying bills or applying for a license much easier. Imagine though the challenges one might experience if they were blind, susceptible to seizures, or had limited hand motor skills.

It is vitally important that governmental websites function at a high level for people of all abilities. AB 904 accomplishes this by requiring that state websites are in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) which were first established by the World Wide Web Consortium in the late 1990s. Interestingly, the foundation of these guidelines was a document first compiled right here in Wisconsin at UW-Madison. Adherence to these guidelines ensure that websites will meet the standard of being perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for people of every ability.

While those with disabilities are currently able to challenge website accessibility issues by issuing an ADA challenge, this bill gives those individuals an additional avenue under state law. It sets clear boundaries for the state that are clear for those in need.

Please join me, Beyond Vision, Disability Rights Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired by supporting AB 904.

To: Assembly Committee on Judiciary  
From: Disability Rights Wisconsin (Contact: Lisa Hassenstab, Public Policy Manager,  
[lisah@drwi.org](mailto:lisah@drwi.org))  
Date: February 8, 2024  
Re: **AB904** - relating to: information technology accessibility standards and granting rule-making authority

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is a private non-profit organization that protects the rights of people with disabilities statewide, with a mission to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. DRW serves as the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of children and adults with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect. With this mission and charge, DRW supports AB904.

On their website, the U.S. Department of Justice notes, "The ways that websites are designed and set up can create unnecessary barriers that make it difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to use websites, just as physical barriers like steps can prevent some people with disabilities from entering a building. These barriers on the web keep people with disabilities from accessing information and programs that businesses and state and local governments make available to the public online. But these barriers can be prevented or removed so that websites are accessible to people with disabilities."<sup>1</sup>

The type of information and services Wisconsinites access through state government websites is broad and varied, including requesting an absentee ballot, finding information on long-term care services, filing state taxes, searching for quality child care, purchasing a hunting or fishing license or a state parks pass, accessing records through the Wisconsin State Law Library, and applying for certain benefits, just to name a few; it even includes finding up-to-date, accurate information on public hearings such as this one, or learning how best to contact their state elected officials who represent them. Implementation of information technology accessibility standards for individuals with disabilities consistent with the most recent web content accessibility guidelines published by the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative or its successor, as is recommended by U.S. DOJ and which this bill would require, is an important and necessary step to ensure Wisconsinites with disabilities have better access to public information and services available through websites of state agencies, the state legislature, and the state courts.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and this bill, and please don't hesitate to reach out with questions or for more information.

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<sup>1</sup> [Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA | ADA.gov](#)



222 W Washington Ave. | Madison, WI 53703  
O: 866-448-3611 | F: 608-251-7612  
aarp.org/wi | wistate@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpwi  
facebook.com/aarpwi

**TO: Representative Tusler, Chair, Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Members**

**FROM: Martha Cranley, State Director, AARP Wisconsin**

**Subject: Testimony in Favor of Assembly Bill 904- Information Technology Accessibility Standards**

**February 8th, 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 904 (Senate Bill 831) which requires the Department of Administration to promulgate rules establishing state agency information technology accessibility standards for individuals with disabilities consistent with the most recent web content accessibility guidelines published by the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative or its successor. The bill further provides that the information technology accessibility standards established by DOA apply to all websites of the legislature and the courts. AARP WI is excited to see a new policy that highlights the needs of our State's able-bodied population who deserve accessible government and court systems websites to make it easier to get the information they need.

AARP as a national organization has advocated for similar standards to Federal agencies like the Federal Communications Commission to conduct oversight and enforcement to ensure access to technological advancements for people with disabilities. Technological advancements should benefit people with all types of disabilities, including sensory, physical, speech-related, and cognitive disabilities.

AARP WI stands with our advocacy partners in support of this bill authored by Representative J. Anderson and Senator Bradley. We appreciate their leadership and focus on our target aging population, many of whom live with disabilities and experience the challenges of accessing information online. Residents all over Wisconsin would have a chance to benefit from these standards and become another step closer to true independence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this common-sense legislation and we at AARP look forward to working with more legislators to promote options that support our aging and able-bodied population.

We urge all members of this committee and the full Legislature to vote yes on AB ~~405~~ 405.

Martha Cranley  
State Director





**Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired**

754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703

608-255-1166

WCBlind.org

info@WCBlind.org

**To:** Assembly Committee on Judiciary

**From:** Denise Jess, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired

**Re:** AB 904

**Date:** February 8, 2024

Dear Chair Tusler and Members of the Assembly Committee on  
Judiciary,

On behalf of Wisconsin residents with blindness, low vision and  
other print-related disabilities, I ask for your support of AB 904,  
relating to information technology accessibility standards and  
granting rule-making authority.

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired is a private  
statewide nonprofit organization with a mission to promote the  
dignity and empowerment of Wisconsinites living with vision loss  
through advocacy, education and vision services. Currently, over  
6% of Wisconsin's population age 18 and over are blind, legally  
blind or have significant vision loss that impacts daily living. This  
population, particularly among older adults, is estimated to  
increase by 118% by 2050 due to eye diseases like macular  
degeneration, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. The highest  
percentages of people with vision loss live in both rural and urban  
areas of the state. Vision loss disproportionately impacts people  
of lower economic means, women and African Americans. People  
with other print-related disabilities, such as cognitive and learning  
disabilities comprise an even larger portion of the state's  
population.

People with vision loss, of which I am one, utilize assistive (or access) technologies to use websites and mobile apps. This includes screen readers, which, as the name implies, make what is on the screen audible for users who cannot see it. Additionally, screen reader users navigate sites using a keyboard, rather than a mouse. Other users with more functional vision use magnification and high contrast to see the content on their screens. While these technologies are life-changing, they are dependent on their ability to interact with a website or mobile app that has been coded correctly. When access technology users encounter an uncoded or poorly coded website, we may be greeted with unreadable content, unlabeled images or the inability to search the site or enter key data.

These accessibility barriers have long been recognized in the blindness community and among those with other print-related disabilities. An international effort called the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) has emerged to provide guidance to web and app creators to increase accessibility. These guidelines can also be used to evaluate how perceivable, operable, understandable and robust a site is for users with disabilities. AB 904 calls for State of Wisconsin websites to use these industry standards for website design and remediation.

The bill further directs the WI Department of Administration to promulgate rules based on the most current version of WCAG for state agency and legislative websites. DOA is well positioned to lead in this area. My organization has been in contact with them about website accessibility since 2020 and I continue to be impressed as they roll out initiatives to make state websites more accessible for all Wisconsinites.

Take a moment to consider how much time we all spend on websites and mobile apps daily to conduct work, personal business, gain health and other critical information, connect with family and access entertainment. Now imagine if you were unable to access all these things because they have not been designed to

be available to you. This is the reality of many people with print-related disabilities including vision loss. Assuring that our state's websites are accessible opens doors for gaining employment, doing important business with state agencies, and getting critical information on healthcare, voting, transportation, food access and all that our state government has to offer. Additionally, making state websites accessible reduces the risk of a lawsuit for failing to comply with legal requirements.

Voting to move AB 904 to the full Assembly for consideration is a crucial step forward in Wisconsin to create access for all its residents. Thank you for your consideration and support.

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired is happy to be a resource for you and your constituents. We can provide critical information on the transportation needs of the 31% of Wisconsin residents who are non-drivers; discuss the importance of access to health care and vision rehabilitation services that open doors to employment and independent living; and share information on reducing barriers for voters with disabilities. If you have constituents new to vision loss, we can support them by connecting them to life-changing resources to support their independence. Please reach out.

Kind regards,

Denise Jess, Executive Director

February 8, 2024

Hello Committee on Judiciary,

My testimony is for Assembly Bill 904 Relating to: information technology accessibility standards.

As an individual that is blind, I have worked in IT for over 20 years. Before I retired, I had advanced to Software Developer Senior Specialist. My main expertise was on the mainframe, with limited knowledge about coding a web site.

As we know federal agencies are to follow the WCAG standards when creating or making changes to their web sites. Currently in the state of Wisconsin there are no regulations to have state and local agency web sites to follow the standards.

When these agency web sites don't follow the WCAG standards, it will cause problems for me as I use screen reading software. These standards helped to make web sites accessible to me as well as individuals with other disabilities. In fact, the site becomes easier to navigate for individuals that don't have a disability.

When I encounter problems, I will let the agency know what is happening. Sometimes I get a response and other times I don't. If the standards were followed, I wouldn't have to call the agency. Following the standards doesn't mean the site will be 100% perfect.

I'm asking the committee to pass Assembly Bill 904 allowing individuals with a disability to navigate a web site without assistance.

Thanks very much,



**Kevin Meyers**

414-839-0635

Member Milwaukee County task force for on-demand transportation service  
Member Transportation Advocacy Committee – Independence First  
Outreach Director – Blind Outdoor Leisure Development (BOLD)  
LCIF Coordinator – Greendale Lions