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NEWS

Bill would speed up repairs for power wheelchairs in Conn

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HARTFORD, Conn. (WTNH) — Many people in Connecticut rely on custom power wheelchairs for mobility and independent living, but getting them repaired can be a nightmare for residents.

Power wheelchair users told News 8 manufacturers can take weeks or months to complete the repairs, which can leave them without a way to get around.

A new proposed House bill in the Connecticut General Assembly called “Consumer Right to Repair,” would force manufacturers to speed up the repair processes for power wheelchairs.

New Horizons Village in Unionville is a residential community for adults with physical disabilities where more than 90% of its 101 residents depend on power wheelchairs.

Marissa McDougal, a New Horizons Village resident calls her power wheelchair an extension of her body.

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“It’s a chance for me to have increased mobility because I suffer from the disability cerebral palsy. It gives me independence, freedom, and the ability to live my life on my terms, to the fullest,” Mcdougal said.

When a front wheel popped off Mcdougal’s wheelchair this winter, it took a week for the manufacturer to respond and repair it, leaving her without her wheelchair.

“I can’t go anywhere...I really can’t function the way I’m used to functioning,” Mcdougal said.

Carmen Meyers said her power wheelchair is her world. When her six tires went bald, causing her to slip on surfaces, it took six months to get them replaced.

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“It needs to be considered the fact that we are human beings. We are people – just like people who need vehicles to go to work. Even if I’m stuck home, I don’t want to be stuck in bed,” Carmen said.

The bill would force the two main wheelchair companies in the state: Numotion & National Seating and Mobility, to speed up the repair processes for power wheelchairs.

“This bill requires that when they reach out for a repair that they hear back within 24 hours – because
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The bill would also require companies to provide users with a replacement wheelchair, while they wait for repairs.

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If passed, the bill would bring the two main companies, wheelchair users and disability advocates together to talk about the issues and how to take the next steps.

The bill passed the Human Services Committee and now the Judiciary Committee has until Friday to move it forward.

News 8 will continue to follow updates on the bill.

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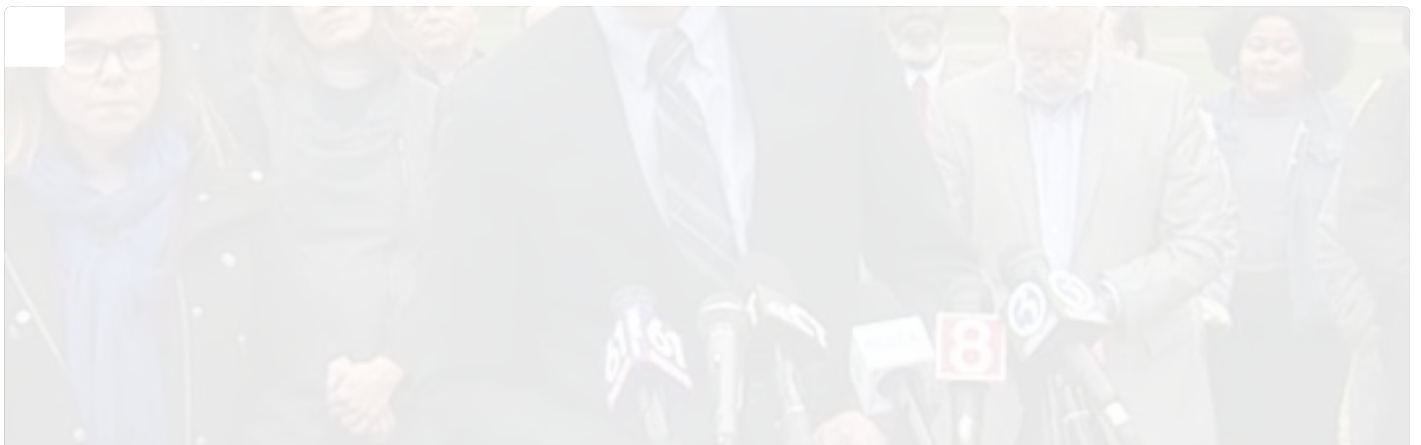
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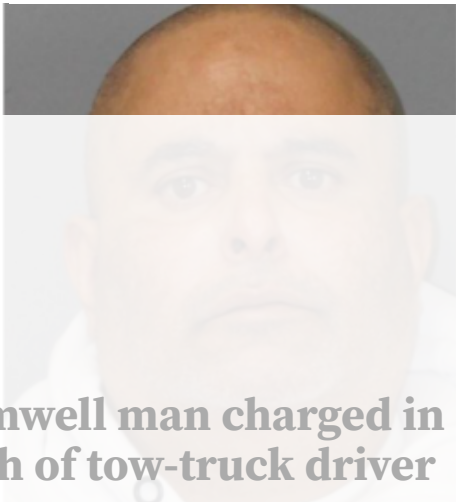
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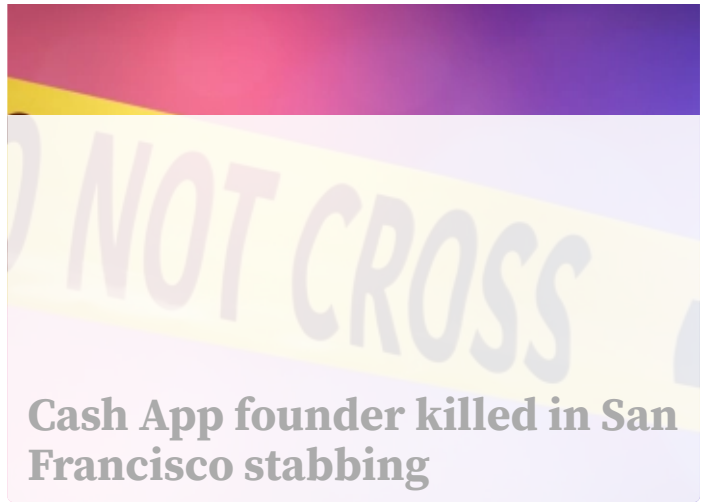
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