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Wheelchair Task Force  
My testimony-lived experience/comments-statement  
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When your chair's not right, your day's not right.

Hello everyone, my name is David Morgana. I have a c-7 spinal cord injury as a result of a motor vehicle accident in the year 1997.

In the past 26 years I've used a powerchair, a power assist chair and currently use a manual wheelchair. I've relied on Connecticut Rehab, which turned into ATG and is now referred to as NuMotion. So essentially I've had a relationship with this company for well over 20 years. But with different names.

In fact there are people that still work for the company all of this time. In the beginning you used to be able to call and speak with someone that was at the shop. There was a personal connection to local staff. They knew who you were and if there was an issue I had no problem getting to speak with someone that could address any problem I may of had. As I reflect back, waiting times to get chairs fixed didn't seem long and customer service was good, people returned your calls. If you needed a specific time for an appointment you could schedule that. If a part was required they would usually preorder it as they were doing the paperwork, this cut down wait times, nothing is ever perfect but overall things were good. They went above and beyond. They worked with you. The work got done.

Over time as the company went from Connecticut Rehab to ATG things started to change. Wait times seemed longer, but I was dealing with many of the same people, that relationship that had been built up over time was intact and if there was a problem you could call and get someone local to help you.

Then the company transitioned to what it is today, NuMotion. No longer that independent company focused on personal relationships, above and beyond customer service, but something else.

That personal connection to local staff has been essentially severed in the interest of efficiency.

Now when you call you get someone at a call center or a representative that's out of state and in some cases out of the country, specifically the Philippines. All the local extensions are no more and if you want to talk to someone local you have to go through a call center and request a call back; many times you won't get your phone calls returned.

When you need to set up an appointment you have little to no choice as to days and times.

Wait times have increased, in my experience a typical wait time is 2-3 weeks just to be seen in the home. 2-3 weeks for an in-home evaluation. I think the only reason it is this short and not the 24-27 days on average reported by the companies for in-home assessments is that there is some speeding up the process by using my smart phone and going through the remote technician to evaluate what's broken and get the process going. But many people don't have this option available to them and not all repairs can be evaluated this way, even if it is.

So after waiting a month or more for the evaluation, submitting to insurance, receiving the part, and final verification, you're most likely going to have to wait another 2-3 weeks or more to get an in-home repair appointment.

I just got a swing-away armrest and receiver replaced. It took a month for it to come in, and it sat in the shop for 3 days, they were waiting for Medicare to confirm information. If I had not called when I did I would not have gotten the timeslot I did get because they were still in that process, I was lucky. If I had not chosen the day they gave me it would have been another 2 weeks for an appointment. Which again seems the standard on the low end of time, 6 -8 weeks total.

Numotion also implemented routing software to make their repair appointments "more efficient" for them, so the process to get an appointment now is that you take the day that's available and they text you at the end of the business day before your appointment with the window of time the technician can come to you. So you now have to block off the entire day to make sure you're available for the 4 hour time window they choose for you.

This simply doesn't work for everyone, with work, school, family responsibilities and appointments.

Overall, it seems the new business model is you have to wait two to three weeks to get an in-home appointment or they say, "hey you can come down today or tomorrow and get your chair evaluated or fixed in the shop." It's quite manipulative in my opinion. You've already waited a month or longer, and then they tell you it's going to be another 2-3 weeks, so of course some people are going to take that

opportunity out of desperation, but there are a lot of people who don't drive, don't have the money in their budget to spend on the gas or transportation to get to Rocky Hill, or their chair is so bad off it's simply not an option to travel; and many others can only make it to the shop with significant physical pain and taking significant risks in transferring out of their chair at the shop (where no assistance is provided).

When your parts come in they are not being checked in all cases and technicians are showing up with wrong or incomplete parts or even worse you go to the shop, as they manipulate you into doing, and they don't have what you need, further delaying the repair process.

I can't help but feel that I'm being held hostage. I'm stuck in a dysfunctional relationship inside a broken system. A broken system controlled by corporate interests.

I do not blame the local staff or even middle management; it is the unseen entity behind the curtain that is controlling the strings.

This is why the industry cannot be relied upon to do the right thing, they cannot be trusted to police themselves, they can't even be intellectually honest about how many wheelchair technicians they have working for them and I can't help but feel gaslighted when one week we are told NuMotion has 6 or 7 wheelchair technicians and then the next week we're being told there is a "misconception" and that they really have 14 technicians, moving the goal post by changing the definition of who they consider to be a technician. Coincidentally matching the same amount of technicians claimed by National Seating and Mobility.

We've let them do this for far too long and the results are clear: the people are suffering.

Some people end up stuck in their beds, limiting their ability to live independently, not being able to go to school or work or, in more dire situations, ending up injured physically, not to mention the emotional and mental strain we go through dealing with a broken chair and waiting weeks and months not knowing what will happen or when our chairs will be fixed. Not only is the person that uses the wheelchair affected, but our family, friends and loved ones go through this with us.

The primary solution to fixing the wait time issue is to hire more wheelchair technicians, plain and simple. Their own data proves it. When called out on this fact they say it out loud in a task force meeting and admit that hiring more people will largely solve the wait time issues.

It was said by Numotion last week that, if they could hire 10 more technicians they would, but in the same breath they blame economics for not doing so.

When I hear this I can't help but feel disappointed, that compared with the locally owned companies of the past, profits have become more important than the people they are responsible for, who rely on these 2 companies to live independently, and they are failing us.

I wish I could believe that *this time* will be different, that *this time* they will do better, that *this time* they will live up to the high standards of care and customer service they claim to hold themselves to. I just don't believe them anymore.

This is the very reason why I believe government intervention is required here, Because when it comes to the people's interests or these companies' own corporate interests, we will always lose, unless government gets involved to protect the people.

The current situation is unsustainable.

I call upon legislators to help us find a way forward.

Please help us.

Thank you.