

Letter of Intent: Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities

To the Selection Committee:

I am writing to express my interest in serving on the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities. As both an educator and a person living with life altering chronic illness, I have a deep understanding of how policy, design, and daily practice intersect to determine whether people can fully participate in community life. My goal is to help ensure that Somerville remains a city where accessibility and equity are not just compliance targets, but shared civic values reflected in every program and space.

In my professional work as an education consultant, I specialize in helping organizations make complex systems more humane, functional, and inclusive. That same systems-thinking approach informs how I view disability access. I have spent years navigating fragmented medical and civic structures. These experiences have shown me both the ingenuity that individuals must develop to survive such systems and the urgent need for institutional redesign so that access does not depend on persistence alone. This lens is especially important as more and more Americans experience invisible disability in the wake of Long COVID and other post-viral syndromes.

I believe the Commission's charge—to identify and remove structural, policy, and attitudinal barriers—is exactly the kind of work where lived experience and analytical skill must meet. I bring a strong capacity for collaboration, data-driven decision making, and communication across sectors. I also bring deep local commitment: as a Somerville resident, parent, and active participant in school and civic initiatives, I care about the integrity of this city's promise that every resident has a fair chance to contribute.

I would be honored to support the Commission's mission to promote equality, preserve the ADA's protections, and build an inclusive and accessible community where all residents can thrive.

Sincerely,

Jessie Gerson Nieder
Somerville, MA