



“It seems like there is always a new road block, including excessive prior authorizations for medicines that I have been on for five, six, or seven years. To always have to go back again and again to renew them is hard. It’s as if someone’s stepping in to insinuate that the doctor and I aren’t making the right decisions.”

Meet Chase Bearden | Austin, TX

If the top legislative leaders and staff echelon overseeing the work of the Texas Legislature had to compile a list of the most respected, knowledgeable, impassioned, and effective policy advocates within the State Capitol, Chase Bearden’s name would be at the top of the list, without exception. The beloved disability rights expert is one of the most humble and self-effacing advocates working under the dome. Yet his credentials and credits are many, including: Director of Advocacy: Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Legislative Award Winner: Texas Rehabilitation Association, Vice Chair: Medicaid Managed Care State Advisory Committee, and more.

His Story

“It happened when I was 17. I was planning on doing a front double layout, but I only did one-and-a-half. I hit face first and broke my neck at C5-C6, which paralyzed me from the neck down. After that, I spent three months in the hospital. I had to start the whole process of learning and relearning everything: full-time therapy; using the bathroom; taking care of my skin, etc.”

“When I went home, I was on 23 different medications and trying to manage this new life: learning to drive; going back to school; and having the right equipment, including all the adaptive devices for my vehicle. Doing anything took 10 to 20 times longer than before my injury.”

Receiving the right medicines at the right time was an important component for Chase when he was initially injured. It remains the case now as he lives independently with his wife and their canine son, and works full-time for the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) (www.txdisabilities.org). CTD envisions a future where all Texans with all disabilities may work, live, learn, play, and participate fully in the community of their choice.

Chase understands the importance of the doctor-patient relationship and believes that at the end of the day it should be the doctor and the patient making the decisions.

“When people don’t have to jump through hoops like step therapy just to take care of themselves, that creates hope. Barriers like excessive prior authorizations and step therapy affect not only your physical health, but also your mental health. While you are waiting, you are wondering ‘why?’ While you feel miserable, you are wondering if this is going to continue and if you are ever going to get the medicines you need.”

Chase also worries about the future of healthcare, especially as it affects members of the disability community.

“People in the disability community are scared. Healthcare is difficult to navigate. We hear a lot of words like ‘cost savings’ and ‘cost deferment.’ At the end of the day, we are actually talking about patients and trying to make people healthy. It’s not about using management tools to try and nickel and dime people into being healthy. Let’s give people what they need from the start so that they can get on with their lives.”



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