

## Transcript of Rights Here, Rights Now Episode with Ryann

Produced by the disAbility Law Center of Virginia.

**[INTRO]:** The information provided on this podcast does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice. Instead, all information, content and materials available are for general informational purposes only.

**[Enter host, Ren Faszewski.]**

**[Ren Faszewski]:** Welcome to Rights Here, Rights Now!- the podcast about disability, advocacy, and activism. I'm your Advocate Host, Ren Faszewski.

**[Enter host, Virginia Pharis]**

**[Molly Carter]:** ♀️ And I'm your Advocate Host,  
Virginia Pharis.

**[Ren Faszewski]:** Every two weeks we dig into relevant issues, current events, and avenues for self-advocacy!

**[Molly Carter]:** ♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠ Because someone has to.

**[Ren Faszewski]:** ♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠ And it might as well be us.

**[Molly Carter]:**

**\*This podcast is produced and edited by the disAbility Law Center of Virginia, the Commonwealth's protection and advocacy agency for disability rights.\***

[Again, enter hosts Virginia Pharis and Ren Faszewski]

**[Ren Faszewski]:** ██████████ So today is actually going to be kind of a special episode of this is going to ██████████ have to be first of a two-parter just because we had so much to ██████████ talk about-- █with this particular guest.

**[Virginia Pharis]:** Yes, today we had the privilege honestly to speak with the fantastic Ryann Mason who is Miss Wheelchair Virginia the Reigning Ms. Wheelchair Virginia in 2020? Year so if you want to hear about that or tips for self-advocacy and her experiences working in healthcare as a person with a disability stay tuned for that!



**[Ren]:** Before we jump into that, let's check out disability in the news.

Earlier this year we shared that President Biden was proposing a \$400 billion investment in Medicaid home and community based services, but now Congress is considering less than half that amount. In September new legislation came from the US House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee stating they would allot just \$190 billion for home and community based services. There is still opportunities for additional funding to be allocated before it's voted on by the full House, says Nicole Jorwic, senior director of public policy at The Arc, so advocates need to work hard to push lawmakers to add the additional funding. Nearly one million people are waiting for services such as respite care, residential supports, supported employment, and other services paid for by Medicaid Waivers and without the full \$400 billion dollar funding these people will continue to wait and suffer without the services they need.

**[Ren Faszewski]:** All right, thank you, again, Ryann, for joining us today. We are very excited to have you on the show.

**[Enter, our celebrity quest, Ryann Mason ]**

**[Ryann Mason]:** ♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠♠ Thank you guys for having me. It's so great to be here.

[Ren Faszewski]: It is. I would think, the first time that we've had a *literal celebrity on our show*. [FACT!] It's-- it's a first for us. Can you tell us a little bit about how you got involved with Ms. Wheelchair Virginia and a little bit about that experience?

[Ryann Mason]: Absolutely. So, I guess it will be it was about two years ago now. That would be Fall of 2019. And, I had never heard of the Miss Wheelchair America Pageant or the Miss Wheelchair Virginia Pageant. I had \*no idea\* it existed. [And] I had actually worked with a photographer who shoots for the Ms. Wheelchair Virginia & Ms. Wheelchair America pageants. All in this area. I had no idea that he did that on the side! And, he reached out to me, again, and was like: Hey, by the way there's this pageant going on, [called] Ms. Wheelchair Virginia and, you should, it's in your home, it's in Roanoke- You should go out for it! And, I'm sorry I'm looking down at myself; I, like have so many tatoos, & half my head is shaved; Every other word is an *expletive* on my Instagram and he was laughing at me, and, he said: It's not a beauty pageant it's an advocate and it's all about public speaking abilities and do the advocacy like you should just go out for it?!?

I'm sorry What about this says pageant to you?

And, at this time in my life: I had just separated from my partner of (of the past) six years, I had moved back in with my parents at the age of 27, like- I was basically had my rock bottom, of, I don't know what to do with myself & I'm sure; so I just thought: Why not? Let's do something **completely off the wall!** So, I signed up on a Monday. And, I get called that day by a friend of mine, in the area, and, he said: Hey, by the way, the Miss Wheelchair Virginia's pageant is coming through. It needs judges! Can you sign up?

[Cont.]:

Well, I didn't know anything about the pageants! It had said: Miss Wheelchair Virginia 2020. This is 2019! I thought I was signing up for next year's! [Ren: Laughing, Okayyy. J ] And I said, well, sure, I can judge (pause). Like, I can probably do that. But, I don't know if it'll ruin my chances of competing next year. And he said: Well, let me check with the director give me a second. He calls the director, and, 30 seconds later, then, I get a **panicked phone call**. This is on a Monday, and, the pageant date is Saturday!

She said: This is for, this week, [that is what] you're competing for. I said- I thought I had a year to prepare for this?

And she said: No it's..it's in the next seven days. And I said, Well, do you what do you need? **Do you need more people to compete, or, do you need more judges?** And she said, We need more people to compete! And I was like, Well, if you think that in seven days if you think that in SEVEN DAYS I can put a routine (pageant) together in seven days of (after) never doing this in my entire life-- *And most of these girls have been preparing for a year* Sure, I'll do it. But, it's like if you don't think it's possible, then, I won't bother you (you.)

Um- And then I won! [Laughter!] Sooo. It was definitely the most unexpected thing that has happened to me in a very long time or ever and I think I blacked out when they called my name! J [Laughter.]

Apparently one of your secret talents is competing in pageants in little week long time frame not as skilled a has to come up a lot it just has to come up once or twice so miss wheel chair Virginia if it's not a pageant but you know like you said that you were working with was working and I think just like based on the title loan and it's going to get married to other programs in pageants are traditionally able-bodied what makes Miss wheel chair Virginia different absolutely restaurant bikini it did you have to wear evening. Like what was your talent and maybe that's because I think I would have quit on the spot if they were going to give me it is an advocacy-based project where you build a platform very similar to the Miss America Pageant and that you base your advocacy work on four year year of your brain

[Ren Faszewski]: Apparently, one of your secret talents is competing in pageants in [just a] week long time frame! (Yes!)

[Ryann Mason]: Learn something new about yourself every day [More laughter]

[Virginia Pharis]: That's not a skill that has to come up a lot. It just has to come up once or twice! So, the Miss wheelchair Virginia it's not a pageant. But, you know, like you said, that: you were working with a photographer who was working w/ other Miss Americas and I think just like based on the title alone, that does look a lot like [it's similar to] Miss America. And just to..kind of..compare it to other programs? I mean, to pageants that are traditionally able-bodied: What makes Miss Wheelchair Virginia different?

[Ryann Mason]: Absolutely. It's different. At first, people asked me: So, do you where a bikini? And, Did you have to wear an evening gown? Like: What was your talent?

And I was like, *No, no no, I did not.*

Maybe that's because **I think I would have quit on the spot** if they were going to make me (do that!) wear a bikini. J

So: it is an advocacy-based project where you build a platform very similar to the Miss America Pageant and that you base your advocacy work on that (specific) platform, you know, for the year of Your Reign. And so, you know, for Miss Virginia, we were judged on an interview panel. And we were judged on the platform that we had to develop. And: a speech around that. A speech- [both] onstage and offstage! (Wow.) And so, we just had to develop this giant poster, basically, that encompassed all that we were as a human! And so, I remember: I was just staying up all night, and just took pictures, and glitter, and, this ridiculous collage that was just a mass of everything and every human that I loved in this world.

I was just like, I don't know what I'm doing, so, I am going ALL OUT! But, it's very similar to Miss America. You know, during your Rein, you travel, throughout the state, you know, educating, using your disability platform. You know, I got to talk to many awesome people just like you guys! Traveled across the state of Virginia. It was pretty incredible!

[Ren Faszewski]: Can you tell us a little bit about that platform that you came up with?

[Ryann Mason]: Sure! So- I-- One of the only, you know, good things that came out of COVD, for me, was that, I got to be Miss Wheelchair Virginia for two years straight. Which meant that I actually got to develop two platforms. My first year, I was *VERY NEW*, to disability advocacy. And, the disability community as a whole. I had only REALLY been involved for maybe a year and a half? And, I had only been in a chair for about..half as long. So there was this thing in the back of my head, of like: I am so new to this? Why did they choose me?

You know. How am I going to  
How am I going to represent conditioning to a wheelchair for the first time?

**And, I had just gone through losing my dream job of an ER Trauma Nurse because of my disability.** At the exact same time, had gone, then, had gone through, you know My marriage ending because of there were a lot of it- what I was going through, with disability, but physically and mentally, it had, a huge impact on my mental health and, mind you, I was someone who prided herself it's not having a lot of mental health issues growing up-- It was it was a lot! It was a total mental break, honestly.

And, I learned very quickly, that there was little to no mental health Resources directly targeted to humans with disabilities, who are going through mental health struggles BECAUSE OF their disability. So then, that first year, because of that I began, I very much focused on mental health care for those with disabilities and those resources. **And, at that same time, I worked, as a case manager at the hospital.** And, b/c I was working in that area, I saw And, I knew that there were no mental health resources because, *as a case manager, I would've been the one providing them to my patients.* So, I knew there were none!

So that is what I advocated for my very first year. That was the platform. And, it was a great platform. I learned so much about it. But, you know, as I am doing this, I am a registered nurse. And I had taken a step back from the bedside, to learn, you know, doing all this with a disability, but then had said, you know, Well, why can I not just, do this from the bedside, from my wheelchair? You know? And then, when COVID hit, they said, Well, we don't see

why not! And so, then, I worked out on the floor, as a nurse. And, through that position, you know, it kind of dawned on me: Why have I never seen a healthcare worker in a wheelchair? Why have I never had a doctor or nurse in a wheelchair before? Or, you know, with just, any type of disability? And so, that experience, I had that became my platform, in my second year. Having had that experience myself. Which has now been my platform for several years, which is: Advocating for healthcare workers with disabilities, not just in wheelchairs, but, blind, deaf, whatever the disparity is, (and all kinds of disabilities). For those that want to go into health care. You know, whether that's those that want to go into nursing who are in wheelchairs, or just those, like myself, who, came into their disability later in life and watching you know, and being told all of a sudden, you know, as if all of my nursing knowledge was stored in my legs! No, you cannot be a nurse like this. Um, and so, I took that on as my main platform, and I'm now working, at the bedside, as a registered nurse. And, I still get to advocate for, other disabled healthcare workers, so. ]

[Ren Faszewski]: I just think that that's incredible, because You know, we talk all about representation in all different areas of our society, and, we tend to focus on things like race. Or, you know, we focus on gender. But, we don't often focus as much on those with disabilities. And, I think that representation is so important particularly in that field. Because, you know, you're coming in with this breadth of experience that other healthcare workers may not have, and may not think about first. Yeah, I love that. I'm all for it!

[Ryann Mason]: Yeah, it's something that's been really interesting to me. You know: I've been in health care since I was sixteen. And, I started off as an EMT, right off the bat. And I just, I never left. It's been almost 13 years. During my career it's been fascinating to watch just the field change. You know, there was this, and there still is, this stigma. You know, your doctor, your nurse, your health care worker, whoever they are They aren't seen as people, you know? So, because I role in there in this great big red wheelchair, you know, there's a part of my personal life, a part of me. That I cannot hide. This is something about me that is very obvious. You know, it's the first thing they see when they (or I) walk into a room. And so I really had to rethink my own career path, you know. I am covered in tattoos. And, I do wear bright colors. And these wheels light up. So it became, I don't get to hide who I am as a person. So, I have to be okay with who I am as a person. I don't have this blank canvas of a doctor or a nurse. So I can't hide. And so, then it became not only my disability but also my sexuality, was something that I no longer wanted to hide. You know: I've been wearing/rocking a rainbow pin since I was sixteen it's been attached to my badge, since I was an EMT at age 17! And it just I never stopped. And I just think that, essentially, being someone who basically grew up in hospitals, you know, I bring something new and different to the healthcare field, and so that's what's been so cool about being Miss Wheelchair Virginia, is I get to, go around and talk to so many new med students and doctors, and physical therapist, and kind of remind them that: Yes, healthcare for us is just a job. Yes, the hospital is just-- you know-- That's our office that's where we are every single day OF our lives- around totally normal for us. But, for our patients, this is very likely the worst day of their lives, and, it's something that healthcare workers often forget. The emotional and mental trauma that is going through the Healthcare System. Especially if you're not the one who was born with the healthcare able bodied ability. It's been the best 2-year that's for sure! ]

[Virginia]: You know, it sounds like, that in these last two years, you have seen you know, it's a common experience for people to *become disabled due to chronic illness*. And these situations people are heavily involved with like having to go to doctor's appointments all the time and be at the hospital all of the time. And, a big part of that is that disabled people are not having their symptoms taken seriously! Do you have any advice for disabled people, advocating for themselves, especially with medical professionals?

[Ryann Mason]: Absolutely. I have encountered this SO MUCH, over the years. My disability was pretty rare, at the time. The doctors probably remember it from a little square in the corner of a textbook in med school...and [.] many of them couldn't pronounce it. And so, something that I didn't know, really, until, later on something that I learned later in my disabled life would be that you are not-- **you don't have to take that from your health care providers** **You are allowed to fire your health care providers which is something that a lot of people are afraid to do, you know.** AND it's not so much that you feel like that you're dealing with gaslighting of you, like, that, *I'm not taking your symptoms seriously!* I mean, there's a line and that I dealt with a lot of patients, where it's not as much, Okay the patient says that, this doctor isn't giving me the drugs that I want-- I'm going to go find a new one!! Nope. No. That's not what I'm talking about that's there's no doctor shop. But, like, if it looks bad, and like: If you explain your symptoms to a doctor, and they, like, I don't know, say:

It's all in your head. A lot of times with women we get this **a lot.** Like: You have anxiety, or, you just need to rest!! And that's fine! but you know doctors. They make mistakes! They're human too. And, you know, you do not mesh and get along with well and work well with every healthcare provider that you try out. And, they know that, too. And that's also fine you are--- not-- you do not have to stay your doctor just because they're your doctor, and, they have been seeing you, even seen you since you were born. And that, definitely, that's something that I ran into, you know, and have made mistakes in the past.

Because growing up in South Western Virginia there just weren't a lot of doctors. And, they weren't a lot of disabled people and so, I ended up, just me as a human being a total people pleaser, had the hardest time with this, like: No no no; they are my doctor, so they know (what they're doing! Or, you know, I'm a nurse, so I know things. No! It does not have to be like that. Like, please don't do that. It's generally more toxic in the long run and that's how we run into people you know living the life as they had no idea that they had a chronic illness for 10 + years because I just got **told** over and over that: It was anxiety.

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And so, for me, I remember, I think I was either a freshman or a sophomore in high school. And, I got up one day, was a freshman or sophomore in high school I remember I woke up one morning could not get out of bed just could not move my legs could not do it. And, I and could not put weight on my legs { } had no idea was going on now I have slept with both the hips that were dislocated. And so, all the nerves were asleep. And they we're not working. And, my hips were not going back in their sockets like they should. Because: the first time that ever happened, & at that time, then, I no idea! So, I went to the doctor, and they sent me to an ortho specialist who said: Oh this is the ligament that's just flipping over a joint on your hip that's all it is-- you're fine! Yeah, what it is is my hips, they are, dislocating every time I walk. But because that is not a normal the normal a diagnosis-- because I was a dancer and, my doctor, had told me that that is not what it was It was so ingrained in my brain like: No, no, I'm fine what are you talking about?? I could have very possibly would not be in this wheelchair as early as I ended up in one it had I known how to take care of my hips. And, had I known what was going on with them. And then that's just that's it that we taking over here a diagnosis or we hear an answer from a position and we stay well back to the end-all-be-all that's it and that's true if you don't feel comfortable with the diagnosis get a second opinion there's nothing wrong with that in many Physicians if they're worth their salt it with any means encourage you to do so you're not going to hurt anyone's feelings there is a very you know ingrained Southern Girl no no no that is very hard to overcome but you have to look out for yourself and for your own well-being and so I think that is the biggest lesson I taught myself and I had to learn the hard way and self-advocacy is you know if something feels wrong or something feels, like, you have a question about it or what-- **ask for it don't just sit there and think they know that more than me because there's my healthcare provider ask for that a second opinion someone else to take a look at you you're only going to help yourself and you're not hurting anyone's feelings.** and I think what she said in terms of red flags and it's a really should get that second opinion!

[Ren Faszewski]: And let me just say: If it DOES hurt their feelings, then, that is DEFINITELY a red flag. And, you *should GET that second opinion!*

[Virginia Pharis]: I am just over here **Furiously taking notes!--taking serious notes!** So, can you talk a little bit about you know even though everything, with people knowing what ED syndrome is, something that people are born with. Like, you know it presents itself a little bit more, you know, more, it's in, a bunch of teenagers, and young adults. And in the a relatively short amount of time in your life having gone through the world as you do, as, an able-bodied passing person, and then, as, a person with a physical disability: **How has your perspective changed, during that transition?**

[Ryann Mason]: OH! J It was. Such a fascinating like period in my life when I realized that I got to see both sides of this world actually working in healthcare going and seeing how differently my co-workers treated me. As someone with invisible disability, versus not, That was just very interesting like I said, I went through it a time, where it was almost as if all of my nursing knowledge is stored in my legs? (Laughter.) So, I took a job [as a case manager] So, and then, once I started using wheelchair, about 3 years ago, **I tool a step away from the bedside to learn how to like, you know, LIVE with a disability [in this new body.] And, you know, if it's something that. if you're (not) used to it? I was seeing patients I wasn't Hands-On [anymore] with my patients. I was getting them set up, etc.**

And, I'm going around, the hospital, and, at this point in my life, you know, **I was a very experienced trauma nurse!** I had worked, you know, years, and, you know, I had seen quite

a bit in my time. And, when people would hear that at my new hospital, you know, like they just assumed that: ♦She's never worked the fields.♦ OR, ♦She's never worked (bedside), as a bedside nurse.♦ Or, you know: ♦She's just a case manager! And: She's in a wheelchair!♦ and so when I would pipe up about something, and then, people would be like: ♦Yeah Yeah Yeah.♦ And I was like, ♦I♦love had 13 years of it thank you! I know I'm doing! This is not♦. this is not a new thing for me! And they were just caught off guard. And they were like: This person couldn♦t possibly be a nurse and also be in a wheelchair! And I'm like do you know how many of you ARE♦ But, that was fascinating for me

Also, the way that the public treated me was an interesting thing, for me. Just because I had always been able to kind of float in that in-between world, of, yes, I walk with a cane, but I could try to hide it. I kind of lived in this, place, (dis) to be honest. And I had it was a privilege; It is a privilege that I could hide my disability. You know, if I walked into any room♦you know♦I could hide it. And then, when I got to a point where I couldn't [hide it], I had to face that head-on and deal with a lot of the mental health struggles that came with not accepting that I had a progressive disability. Not accepting [what it meant to] NOT self-identifying as a disabled woman for many years of my life.

I remember that I had an entirely new♦ you know how you have your elevator speech? And then, people feel that they can use you,♦ for you know, anything♦. People♦ would always ask about my condition♦about not that it was this big thing for me. And so, when I kind of did have to face that, and, you know, didn't realize just how differently the world you know, treated disabled people. **I'm, you know, 5 foot 9 inches. I tend to wear very eccentric colors. I love wearing like six inch heels! And being like 6 FEET tall and having people look when I walked into a bar I had turned heads for most of my life. Like, I walked into a room, and I loved to make a statement. And suddenly all the heads are turning when I walk into a room again. But, it is NOT because: who is this Amazon person walking to the room I don't know about that until it was a very suddenly:**

♦

The world is looking to me as a, as something to pity. And, ♦this person is not able to do anything; she's just in a wheelchair. And, ♦Okay we're just going to override (IGNORE) her often. I go into a room and suddenly, people, talk to me like I'm a child; Talk to me as if I have no life experience as if, you know, I'm just a wheelchair. And it was hard-- it was really hard at first. It was completely different from what my life has been like. So, for the first time, in like: **26 years: how am I going to deal with that?** and so I really turned heavily to **chronically Ryann, my Instagram (and) my platform and that's why I just started sharing my life and what I was going through** And what it felt like. And, you know, what it was like that first time being back in a hospital in a white coat♦And, working as a nurse but not going to touch patients. What it was like the first time, my (the) patient questions my ability-- my ability to be a nurse because of my disability. You know: Having to have these personal conversations about my body, and, the way it works, with strangers at least eighty seven times a day! (Laugh!) And it was maddeningly ♦eye-opening and that was what I started to **bond more with my disabled community and realize that there are so many of us who go through this, or, who do or don♦t see this on a day-to-day basis.** And a lot of us don't even realize it. And, don't realize if it does take a pull on her mental health. Because that's just-- that's life and that discussing how my body works with strangers is just something that I will deal with my entire life and the way I don't mind educating people♦.And, (PAUSE), luckily I don't mind to educating strangers on the street! But it does get old. And, it's hard and so having a place like my Instagram, like my social media, to talk to other disabled people, BUT THEN to able-bodied people, and other incidents; About: Oh my gosh never guess what I went through today!♦ Whereas, my disable following is like, oh yeah do that like four times a week. [Laughter!] Sorry they ask you what next to the bread aisle in the grocery store your vagina works in public!?! And, like, (disabled people are like): ♦Dude, on the daily!

and so it's like that I had to go through this and everything but it's been an awesome plan of educate a lot of the able-bodied humans in my life and my following. Yeah I know this is a real thing and yes it is messed up and please stop asking us in Walmart thank you

I think that's something that we should all do, and all walks of try to practice. I think that you don't like you said I finally do the two ends of the spectrum where you either are, or, you know, folks particular physical disabilities♦they♦ are suddenly become children again or like the fact that like you're able to have a job is an inspiration, right? Or, the fact that you're able to do basic human things? Or, like: What an inspiration that we all can look up to and it's like I mean I do want to be with I am I am an inspiration

BUT, to be winning a medal for the basic stuff I would do all the time and the grocery store constantly just like at work my first day working bedside of a chair it's so inspirational and I

thank you cuz this is really hard having done it both ways this is hard that you can I can inspire you from this position I'm okay with that meeting at Walmart not so much so you know a podcast co-host that transition how would you advise people on book becoming like their best self-advocates else but also tapping into the self advocacy community definitely Community has been the biggest thing for me I had absolutely no idea what I was doing trying to navigate this you know world of having to novel disclosed by disability will not just once my ehlers-danlos started affecting no organs and was starting to have any surgeries and kind of having an okay wait no this is not just an elevator tagline that I can kind of throw in as they hey you know it makes me you're here at 3 cool things about me I have this weird genetic anomaly thing for the rest of forever I guess I should probably deal with that I had no idea what I was doing it!!

[Con🔹t]:

**There is a lot but I had to face head-on I became a new wheelchair user, and, a single woman, and I, lived on my own at the same time and got a new career all within like 6 months and became Miss Wheelchair Virginia, I, um, kind of had to relearn who Ryann is as the person.**

🔹And then, just had no idea what I was doing and it was so more people like Hannah who helped me many times getting painted as a disabled person. And yes, there's like a lot of people THAT DO ask a stupid question. But, it's cool because they need both the communities. And I🔹m okay with speaking out about my disability. And I🔹m okay with educating people, Because there are a lot of people who **aren't aware/educated**. And for those people, and also, there are, those who are not quite as open, & okay with their disability. And, you know, you never know asking someone: 🔹Hey ,what's wrong with you?🔹 You 🔹don't know who's this person is🔹IF THIS ability is caused by something horribly traumatic that maybe they're not ready to talk about! Maybe they haven't developed their elevators speel yet! Maybe you asking that question is going to give them a horrible PTSD flashbacks🔹. That are going to send them on a spiral!! We just don't know, and so, that's why I kind of, because I had,🔹 and, 🔹was led, by these amazing disabled teachers, and, these amazing other Disability Advocates, you know. [Like Hannah] You taught me the ways ,and showed me, you know, that the world needs more of us that are willing to speak out, then--- **willing to educate**.

I don't mean to say: *Okay and all other humans in the field* as OUR community is so diverse🔹. I cannot preach, BUT, **that has** helped me more than anything in my own journey through it you're not alone. You are SO far from it! even though some days it feels like it when you're you know you have a bad doctors🔹 appointment, and, you're sitting in the car crying afterwards. Because you know they didn't listen, or, you just feel like ,this is the end of your rope! **We have been there and just realizing that you are not alone and that there are so many others out there to want to help and want to educate if you do feel yourself going through this transition and having trouble with it or what I get all the time**. I just am I allowed to use that label for me if you are asking that question yes when do I need a Mobility Aid if you are asking me that question now absolutely so good at speaking of community

I will see with the community at Large you know like you said there's there's so many like Able Body folks who have no idea what they're doing and we love them very much but how can they be friends allies family just people at the grocery store provides support to people with disabilities particularly those new to their disabled identity but their community at large I'm **never ever ever ever ever in a million years going to be offended if somebody asked me if I need help**. J Growing up in the South--- This is the other thing is-- my girlfriend is also disabled & she is from California, and so, she was just caught off guard by how often people ask me if I need help🔹.

[Con🔹t.]

And I say, you know I said you know you offering to help me is never going to hurt my feelings! However, *how* you respond to me saying no is absolutely do you need help with your groceries? It's like, 🔹no, I'm good!🔹 🔹All right, have a nice day!🔹🔹 End of conversation.

🔹Are you sure, are you really, sure?🔹 Yeah, yes sir, I'm a grown adult and I know what I need help with! And, when I don't, please leave me alone the encounters. You know are bothersome that I am I going to be offended if somebody asked me what's wrong with me know I it personally am not there a lot of disabled people who are not okay with answering that question so it's just something that I always think unless it is brought up to you don't say hello you look like someone who may have erectile dysfunction is that true for you buddy with the physical disability. [LOL!]

[Virginia Pharis]:

**Yeah, you know that that is true but also educating yourself is never harmful Google is it good is it good tool (for that).**

There's a so many questions, when, you see somebody on the street, other than, to ask him:  
◆What's wrong with it?◆

do you want to know more about what life is like living with a disability check into that don't ask strangers their medical history.

**But also we are just people** just because I have wheels under my butt doesn't make me actually magic. **Though, sometimes,** I think it does

◆Just because you know if I find somebody with a spatial deformity or something with a limitation◆They are still a person! Still a human being & deserve to be treated with the same amount of gumption and respect that you would any other human being. J

◆I don't need to be talked to like I'm a child unless I am somebody who has a caretaker with me. Who advises you to speak to me that way! Otherwise I'll talk to me like a human being and uncomfortable situation where the person isn't able to talk back I promise you're the only person that feels uncomfortable that is not at all something that bothers us he's in a little bit it's just you making that effort and treating us like a normal person saying hi in the grocery store and not giving me like a 20 foot width of breath because I know just a normal person and we're all going to get along just fine at my favorite thing I love because my chair is so colorful people stop me all the time and they like I don't know how to say this but like your spokes are rainbow and they're still freaking cool freaking cool like if I'm going to wear this thing is going to be bright and beautiful I love them working night shift because I will into the room and the whole room is disco ball from a wheelchair wheels are constantly just like thank you for just being still open and for being so chill and like no I'm not like other is cool and medical equipment can be very intense and he's very strict it out and it is okay to come in on that I'm allowing kids to come in on that my favorite son loves children because we are human just like you or what we just may get her out of a little differently speak a little differently live life a little differently but otherwise we're still here we may be a little cooler but that's just well Brian this is one of my favorite interviews as of late I am contractually my favorite stomach but we have had so much fun here today if people want to keep the fun going and check you out on social media where do they go absolutely me location of the world Instagram you can find me on their inner chronically underscore right that's kind of chronically underscore r y you can also find the chronically ride platform on pretty much any social media you can think of is active on Facebook Twitter and Clubhouse the Ryann Mason Arlington Ashley my story is on there as well and if you have any questions feel free to contact me on their my messages in my inbox are always open it might take me a little while but yeah I'm very active on social media I left meeting new people and hearing disability and health care or just hey I really like your light up wheels again

**[Ren Faszewski]:**

Thank you so much for joining with us today it has been an utter delight [to have you. J ].

**And now, a DLCV highlight!**

Did you know that open enrollment starts in October For CCC Plus members? CCC Plus is Virginia◆s Medicaid managed care program for people with complex health and long term care needs. CCC Plus includes six different Managed Care Organizations called MCOs for short. During open enrollment, you can switch to a different MCO for any reason. Visit [www.cccplusva.com](http://www.cccplusva.com) to learn about your open enrollment options. Want to stick with your current MCO but need help resolving problems with your care or services? Reach out to the state◆s CCC Plus Advocates by calling 1-800-552-5019.  
{Virginia Pharis}

SO, thank you again Ryann Mason; Miss Wheelchair Virginia, for coming and talking to us! we are going to be back with the second part of our interview with Ryann next episode of that's going to be a little bit more of a of a spicy content episode of where she's going to talk about her experiences as a sex educator and sex education for people with disabilities.

And thank you all, for listening to this episode of Rights Here, Rights Now, from the disAbility Law Center of Virginia. We are available on Apple podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts!

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until next time I'm Virginia Pharis

**[Ren Faszewski]:** And  
I am Ren Faszewski. And this has been: Rights Here!

**[Virginia Pharis]:** Rights  
Now!

**\*\*END OF TRANSCRIPTION!\*\***