

To: The Ohio State House of Representatives #132

From: Detective Lawrence George, Oregon, Ohio

Subject: H.B. 115

Honorable Members of the General Assembly of the State of Ohio,

Greetings, my name is Lawrence George, and I am an active police officer in NW Ohio. I have been in law enforcement for over 23 years; 18 of which as a road patrolman.

I am writing you today to show my support of H.B. 115. This legislation is a great solution to a growing problem. All too often police officers and other public services encounter a person with a communications disability. When citizens are afflicted with this condition, police officers unknowingly interoperate this inability to communicate properly as disobeying and /or ignoring orders, even though it may be quite the opposite. This can be quite dangerous for the person with the disability as well as law enforcement personnel, as it usually leads to an unnecessary escalation in the use of force, and sometimes escalates so far as deadly force. As it stands today officers have no way of knowing of any disability a person may possess that may inhibit their ability to communicate effectively with police until it is investigated and quite often too late.

This bill, should it become law, would empower officers a tool to help prevent such encounters, in some situations, especially during traffic stop encounters. A LEADS check on the plate before an encounter will arm the police with the knowledge they may be dealing with a person who has a communication problem, before even making contact, without the frustration of the person being contacted trying to communicate this to the stopping officer.

This bill, as I read it, is also not just another regulation mandating anyone to do anything. The participation in this new law states it is voluntary, and keeps the disability a private disclosure for official use only. This would be a great way to allow the person with the disability, of which does not prohibit their ability to drive, to convey their disability to who needs to know; without burdening them with another mandate, or taking away their right to apply for and privilege to drive.

I would also like to see this bill include a provision to allow people who cannot speak English or English very well added, as well as an opportunity to disclose what language they speak. Communication barriers are not limited to medical issues only.

Again I believe this bill would be a great asset to the law enforcement and disabled communities alike, and provide the tools necessary for a more peaceful encounter with police to people who cannot convey their messages in a manner they would like too, and prevent a likelihood of an escalation of force, to accomplish the mission of education and enforcement of the law.

Respectfully:

Lawrence George, Jr.

Oregon, Ohio

