

3/27/2017

Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chair Conditt, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the Community and Family Advancement Committee, my name is Jenny Hughes and I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 115.

I am here to ask for your support for House Bill 115. This bill will establish a database of persons who voluntarily register as being diagnosed with and /or sometimes has communication difficulties. It will also allow parents or guardians of such persons to register them for purposes of law enforcement notification.

This would discreetly notify officers of possible medical conditions such as autism, PTSD, deafness, diabetes, dementia...etc **before** approaching a vehicle. This would be a program that would be included in a register available to law -enforcement to notify them of possible interaction with individuals that have a medical condition or disability that may cause them to appear impaired. This would be possible by giving drivers and car owners the ability to voluntarily disclose medical information on their license plates registration. This would have the information readily available for officers before approaching the vehicle which could save time and lives.

I support HB 115 because I support law enforcement and giving them every tool to do their job safely. This would also help police identify particular situations helping to increase the safety of citizens as well as officers.

My husband and I have 2 adult sons that live with autism. Our oldest son Jay is 23 year old, he has defied all the predication doctors gave us and holds a job as well as a driver's license. Jay loves art, his PS4, Comic-Cons, and Renaissance Fairs and is quite the jokester. He has a kind heart and is always ready to help someone.

Jay, who is 6ft tall 250 lbs may have difficulty expressing himself appropriately to authorities because of his communications skills. He may start crying, he may appear impaired when talking. These things could cause undue suspicious which could be avoided if the officers had all the information before approaching the vehicle.

Gabe is 22 years old and would be considered low functioning. Gabe is non-verbal. He is a very hard worker, and has a job at bitter sweet farms. He enjoys physical jobs working with animals, being outside and of course Disney.

I am concerned that if I were to be stopped by a police officer with Gabriel in the car the wrong conclusion may be drawn when my license plate is ran and through Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS) finds I have a Carrying Concealed Weapon (CCW) permit. My car is stopped and from behind the officer sees a grown man moving about. The man they would see would be my 22 year old son rocking back and forth because he is over stimulated by the police lights and the change in our routine. An officer at this point would not know that he could be interacting with a person who has a disability and may feel threatened. He may even think that this man could be going for a gun. Understandably their first instinct would be to protect themselves and be even more on the defense.

While 1 in every 68 people lives with Autism, this is not just about Autism, this would also cover:

- Veterans who 12 out of 100 suffer from PTSD who may be perceived as being defiant
- Hearing impaired who 2 out of every 1000 may appear to be defiant
- 29.1 million people who live with diabetes who may appear to be intoxicated if they are having an episode
- individuals who have meniers disease and suffer from severe vertigo, who may not be able to walk a straight line or lean their head back and touch their nose and may appear intoxicated
- individuals those who live with Parkinson's may appear to be intoxicated

The list continues. These are disorders and medical conditions that touch each one of us either directly or indirectly. It is our job to keep the ones we care for safe.

I support House Bill 115 because: every parent plans to raise their child for about 18 years, set them free for about 30 years. They then hope their child will come back to help them face their own final years. A special needs parent plans to raise their child for 65 plus years and while doing so also has to prepare for the other 20 years or so after they themselves are gone. As a mother I take my responsibility to protect my children very seriously.

I support House Bill 115 because a disability does not define a person. This bill will help the identified individuals keep their independence and give them the ability to communicate to Law Enforcement without spotlighting their disability to the public.

I support House Bill 115 because of Jay and Gabriel Castro.

Chairman Ginter, thank you allowing me time to speak and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.