



From the desk of

Cathy Ruiz,

Parent Mentor

Service Coordinator, Family & Children First Council

Past President, Executive Board, OCECD

Western Buckeye, ESC, Paulding County

March 16, 2017

RE: SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 115

I would like to take this opportunity to express my full support of House Bill 115 which will protect persons being diagnosed with communication disabilities for the purposes of law enforcement notification.

Representative Theresa Gavarone (R-District Three) and Scott Wiggam (R-District One) are sponsoring House Bill 115.

I am the mother of a son (adult son, age 22 yrs.) who is Autistic. As a Parent Mentor with the Parent Mentors of Ohio Program, I provide supports and services to parents of children with special needs and to the school districts who serve them. I also serve on the Executives Board with the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD).

So from both a parent and professional perspective, I sincerely believe that those with communication disabilities having the choice to voluntarily submit the details of their disability is imperative to their safety. Our Law Enforcement have a tough job to do, and without the proper documentation of a communication disability, their job become much more difficult and the person with the disability is at risk.

The information would be accessible to law enforcement officers in the database of persons who voluntarily register as being diagnosed with a communication disability, with no labels on license plates or physical licenses. By having the ability to access the database, law enforcement officers would be immediately aware of communication disabilities when they make traffic stops for violation.

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities is a non-profit organization dedicated to insuring that every child with disabilities is provided a free, appropriate public education, always striving to improve the quality of services for all children and youth with disabilities in Ohio. As a parent, a Parent Mentor, as well as, an Executive Board Member for the OCECD, this is my passion and goal on behalf of those with disabilities as well.

Thank you very much to Representative Gavarone and Representative Wiggam for sponsoring House Bill 115 and for protecting and improving the lives of those with disabilities in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Cathy Ruiz, Parent Mentor