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January 11, 2023

Homeland Security Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of Autism Society of Ohio, I am writing to ask your support for House Bill 321, a bill to enact a statewide 9-1-1 special needs database and to ensure appropriate funding for this endeavor. We strongly support the creation of such a resource as we know it could be an important tool to ensure the safety of some of Ohio's most vulnerable citizens.

According to the CDC, over 2.8 million individuals in Ohio have a disability. Approximately ten percent of those have Autism; many are non-speaking. Our organizations receive numerous reports each year about individuals we serve wandering away or being found by police. Many individuals with Autism hide or run in cases of emergency, complicating the jobs of emergency personnel trying to provide assistance. Having this database available to first responders will make their jobs easier and safer. We commend the legislature for taking this step to protect our most vulnerable citizens and help first responders to better support them.

The Autism Society of Ohio is a coalition of six affiliates of the Autism Society of America: Autism Society Central Ohio, Autism Society of Dayton, Autism Society of Greater Akron Cleveland, Autism Society of Greater Cleveland, Autism Society of Mahoning Valley and Autism Society Northwest Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration. We commend the legislature for considering the development of this tool. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathi J. Machle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathi J. Machle
President, Autism Society of Ohio