

Keith Jesse Testimonial
House Bill 144 (Keith's Law)
April 29, 2025

Good Afternoon, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Ranking Member, and the Homeland Security Committee. My name is Keith Jesse, you have heard about me from Representative Click. Today, I stand before you not for myself, but for the Special Needs and Mental Health Populations that live in our great State of Ohio. I would like to tell you a little about myself before I go into the reasons why House Bill 144 is important to me and the friends that I advocate for.

For the past thirteen (13) years I have dedicated my time to teaching safety classes to our Special Needs Population. In the last six (6) years I have gone even further by obtaining a K-9 trained to track people who have special needs or mental health issues. During the past thirteen (13) years I have gained the trust of people with special needs and have helped them to understand the first responder's point of view. The classes I taught have also helped them to know who they can turn to for help in their communities.

As our communities keep growing, so do our Special Needs and Mental Health Populations. The World Population Organization reports that 1.3 billion or 16% of the world's population has a disability, which is 1 out of 6 people. The CDC has reported that Ohio has 2,610,885 or 28% of its adult population with a disability. On the mental health side, according to NAMI 1,906,000 adults in Ohio have a mental health condition. That is 1 out of 5 people in Ohio with a mental health condition. It is hard to know the exact numbers of children that have disabilities or mental health conditions as many children go undiagnosed. A publication that was made available by the Nisonger Center estimated 115,000 to 152,000 children have a disability in Ohio.

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911 calls by the numbers for the United States are at a rate of about 657,534 total 911 calls per day. 911.gov shows that in 2021, Ohio had 5,945,463 total 911 calls annually. The American Psychological Association has estimated that 20% of police calls are for mental health or substance use crises. Another 20% or more are for people with special needs.

The reason House Bill 144 (Keith's Law) is important is first, it gives families a chance to provide information that may be critical during a crisis without having to do so under the stress of an emergency. Second, it will help first responders by giving them prior knowledge of what they are going to need to deal with. Third, it can help prevent accidental use of force by law enforcement, help medical personnel know the vital background of their patient, or the fire departments to know where someone in the home may be located. This also will help create a better community for all Ohio residents as it will strengthen the relationships with our first responders.

I have provided samples of registry forms to Representative Click's office. I thank you for your time and look forward to helping better Ohio with your leadership.