



Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities

To inspire, empower, and support people to achieve their full potential.

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 144

Kristine Hodge, Superintendent

Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in continued support of House Bill 144, also known as "Keith's Law." My name is Kristine Hodge, and I am the Superintendent of the Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities, which supports nearly 2300 people with developmental disabilities.

As someone who cares deeply about public safety and inclusion, I believe that this legislation is crucial in ensuring that individuals with special needs receive the best possible emergency response. Expanding who is eligible to enroll in the communication disability database will not only improve emergency response outcomes for individuals with many different types of disabilities, but it will also alleviate burdens on local 9-1-1 centers and first responders. In Delaware County, many of our Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS agencies separately administer their own "special needs" registries, and information is not shared between the various jurisdictions. Allowing more people with disabilities to be included in the communication disability database will make it easier for all first responders to access vital information, regardless of where an emergency may occur.

Being included in the statewide registry would also provide a greater sense of security for individuals with special needs and their families. Knowing that emergency personnel have access to essential information can reduce anxiety and stress during emergencies, improving outcomes.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to support Keith's Law and help create a safer and more inclusive emergency response system so that all members of our community receive the best possible emergency response and care. Thank you for your time and consideration.