

Hello, thank you for having us today.

Being a first responder today is more challenging than ever. Those they care for are in a compromised situation and emotions are at an all-time high. Complicate this with a neurodiversity or a spectrum disorder. They are called to situations where the more information they have the better. It protects the first responders to have appropriate responses to emotionally intense situations. When a child has special needs, their responses are not typical. We have always wanted a way to notify an approaching officer that the individual in need may need special attention. They may have triggers; they could be inconsolable. They could escalate when touched. They may not make eye contact. They may not like men. They could have an unsteady gait, non-verbal. These uncontrollable movements could be misinterpreted as reaching for a weapon or disobeying a command. Knowledge of a child or adult's disability prior to approaching a compromised situation would be invaluable to a first responder.

Our son, Brenden has Cerebral Palsy, an unsteady gait and a cognitive delay. His speech is slower, and his thoughts come a bit slower than a typical person's. Being the parent of a child with a disability, you always wonder what they can accomplish. Will they be like others, be treated like others,

be able to do the same as others. Then they do what others can do! They learn how to drive and now you're in a whole new territory of what if's. What if he gets in an accident, what if his friends get in an accident? What if his friend gets pulled over? This is a concern of all parents, typical or with special needs.

We got that call, the call no parent ever wants to receive. Exactly three months with his driver's license, a dark, wet night, driving to an ice hockey game at the Chiller North. Brenden is on the line, he can't talk, we can tell he's sobbing, all we ask is, are you OK? He couldn't answer, we asked, where are you, he couldn't tell us. He said he hit a car, we ask if he's on the road or in an intersection, he couldn't tell me. We eventually figured it out by looking at Life 360, he was in the parking lot of the Chiller. We tell him we know where he is, he calms down some. He shares he's hit a parked car. In this example a neurotypical 19-year-old male driver may call his parents and say, "Dad, I'm ok, I made a bad decision, hit a parked car in the parking lot, I'm not hurt". Children with special needs process emotions differently and to an approaching officer, could appear to be intoxicated or under the influence of substances.

Henry, one of Brenden's friends with autism and Representative Lorenz's son, was driving Brenden one night

in our community. An officer pulls them over for a taillight that was out. Henry starts to cry and panics, quickly calls his mom before the officer approaches. He was in a similar state as we previously described Brenden when he hit the car. The officer approaching could have been extremely upset and finding it disrespectful that Henry was on the phone with his mother as he approaches. She was able to talk to the officer and share with him Henry's needs. If this officer had a way of knowing that the driver of this car is a young male with Autism, knew his sensory needs and how to approach him, and Henry knew his needs were understood, he never would have needed to call his mother or would have been as upset.

In a recent example in Utah where a young man with Autism and CP was shot and killed because he made a movement that gave the officer the idea he was charging him, that could have been our son. Brenden can't get down on his hands and knees easily due to spasticity. Brenden's body would make a movement when told to remain still. He could be shot unintentionally during a time of need. Passing Keith's Law would allow the officers necessary information to prevent undue harm.

Thank you, State Representative Lorenz, for introducing Keith's Law and to all of you for your time and consideration of this legislation. People with disabilities deserve to be treated with dignity and respect for their needs. Officers and EMS deserve the knowledge if available as to what they are approaching when entering a scene.

This legislation will help many in our state with disabilities and would serve as a protective mechanism for our first responders. I understand it may be one extra click on the computer to read this information prior to approaching the scene. However, if that one click, maintains the dignity of a person with a disability and in turn protects the first responder's safety or protects them from wrongful interpretation of a person's condition, that one click is worth the time.

Thank you for your time today and please consider this very important legislation.