



**Proponent Testimony – Paul Jarvis, Executive Director**

**House Bill 359 – Joshua Alerts**

**Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026**

Chairman Johnson, Vice-Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council supports the passage of House Bill 359, a bill that would accelerate the notification requirements for lost or missing children with autism spectrum disorders or developmental disabilities.

The Council is created by the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. Under this federal law, the Council is charged with advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities. The DD Act also includes the goal of the nation to provide families of children with disabilities the support necessary to nurture and enjoy their children at home.

For some families of children with autism or other developmental disabilities, the concern of wandering is very real. Some families have gone so far as to install locks that need to be unlocked from the inside of the home to address behaviors of their own children trying to leave and wander unaccompanied. In the rare cases that children are able to evade or escape the very supervision that keeps them from engaging in dangerous activities, it is vitally important that the child be found immediately, not following a waiting period.

In terms of the emergency alert system, immediate notification for children with autism or other developmental disabilities is a reasoned and responsible approach. Many children disabilities rely on regular help and assistance. Extended absences from this help or assistance could result in serious harm to themselves or others.

Speaking for many families of children with developmental disabilities, applying a waiting period for an emergency alert for their lost child seems counterintuitive to the many programs, services and supports designed to protect these children.

For these reasons, the Ohio DD Council supports passage of House Bill 359.

Thank you for your consideration.