

**As Passed by the House**

**136th General Assembly**

**Regular Session**

**2025-2026**

**Am. H. B. No. 359**

**Representatives Thomas, C., Gross**

**Cosponsors: Representatives Odioso, Lett, Deeter, Click, White, E., Brennan, Denson, Upchurch, Johnson, Russo, Synenberg, Salvo, Mohamed, Lorenz, Newman, Schmidt, Fischer, Lear, Brownlee, Bryant Bailey, Fowler Arthur, Abdullahi, Abrams, Baker, Barhorst, Bird, Brent, Brewer, Claggett, Creech, Daniels, Dovilla, Ghanbari, Glassburn, Grim, Hall, D., Hall, T., Hoops, Humphrey, Isaacsohn, Jarrells, John, King, Kishman, Klopfenstein, LaRe, Lawson-Rowe, Manning, Mathews, A., Mathews, T., Miller, J., Miller, M., Oelslager, Peterson, Piccolantonio, Plummer, Rader, Ray, Richardson, Robb Blasdel, Robinson, Rogers, Sigrist, Sims, Somani, Stephens, Swearingen, Sweeney, Teska, Thomas, D., Tims, Troy, White, A., Williams, Willis, Workman, Young**

**A BILL**

To amend section 5502.522 of the Revised Code to  
clarify the statewide emergency alert system in  
cases of missing autistic or developmentally  
disabled children and to name the alert the  
Joshua Alert.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:**

**Section 1.** That section 5502.522 of the Revised Code be  
amended to read as follows:

**Sec. 5502.522.** (A) There is hereby created the statewide  
emergency alert program to aid in the identification and  
location of any individual who has a mental impairment, has  
autism spectrum disorder or another developmental disability, or  
is sixty-five years of age or older, who is or is believed to be

a temporary or permanent resident of this state, is at a 13  
location that cannot be determined by an individual familiar 14  
with the missing individual, and is incapable of returning to 15  
the missing individual's residence without assistance, and whose 16  
disappearance, as determined by a law enforcement agency, poses 17  
a credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or 18  
death to the missing individual. The program shall be a 19  
coordinated effort among the governor's office, the department 20  
of public safety, the attorney general, law enforcement 21  
agencies, the state's public and commercial television and radio 22  
broadcasters, and others as determined necessary by the 23  
governor. No name shall be given to the program created under 24  
this division that conflicts with any alert code standards that 25  
are required by federal law and that govern the naming of 26  
emergency alert programs. 27

(B) The statewide emergency alert program shall not be 28  
implemented unless all of the following activation criteria are 29  
met: 30

(1) The local investigating law enforcement agency 31  
confirms that the individual is missing. 32

(2) The individual meets at least one of the following 33  
criteria: 34

(a) Is sixty-five years of age or older; 35

(b) Has a mental impairment; 36

(c) Has either autism spectrum disorder or another 37  
developmental disability. 38

~~+(3)~~ (3) (a) The disappearance of the individual poses a 39  
credible threat of immediate danger of serious bodily harm or 40  
death to the individual. 41

(b) A credible threat of immediate danger includes 42  
situations in which the missing individual is nonverbal, has 43  
limited communication ability, or otherwise lacks the capacity 44  
to seek help or ensure the missing individual's own safety. 45

(4) There is sufficient descriptive information about the 46  
individual and the circumstances surrounding the individual's 47  
disappearance to indicate that activation of the alert will help 48  
locate the individual. 49

(C) Nothing in division (B) of this section prevents the 50  
activation of a local or regional emergency alert program that 51  
may impose different criteria for the activation of a local or 52  
regional plan. 53

(D) Any radio broadcast station, television broadcast 54  
station, or cable system participating in the statewide 55  
emergency alert program or in any local or regional emergency 56  
alert program, and any director, officer, employee, or agent of 57  
any station or system participating in either type of alert 58  
program, shall not be liable to any person for damages for any 59  
loss allegedly caused by or resulting from the station's or 60  
system's broadcast or cablecast of, or failure to broadcast or 61  
cablecast, any information pursuant to the statewide emergency 62  
alert program or the local or regional emergency alert program. 63

~~(E) A~~ (E) (1) Subject to division (E) (2) of this section, a 64  
local investigating law enforcement agency shall not be required 65  
to notify the statewide emergency alert program that the law 66  
enforcement agency has received information that meets the 67  
activation criteria set forth in division (B) of this section 68  
during the first twenty-four hours after the law enforcement 69  
agency receives the information. 70

(2) If the missing individual under division (B) of this 71  
section is under eighteen years of age and has either autism 72  
spectrum disorder or another developmental disability, the local 73  
investigating law enforcement agency shall notify the statewide 74  
emergency alert program that the law enforcement agency has 75  
received information that meets the activation criteria set 76  
forth in that division as soon as that information has been 77  
verified. 78

(F) Nothing in this section shall be construed to 79  
authorize the use of the federal emergency alert system unless 80  
otherwise authorized by federal law. 81

(G) As used in this section: 82

(1) "Autism spectrum disorder" has the same meaning as in 83  
section 1751.84 of the Revised Code. 84

(2) "Cable system" has the same meaning as in section 85  
2913.04 of the Revised Code. 86

(3) "Developmental disability" has the same meaning as in 87  
section 5123.01 of the Revised Code. 88

(4) "Law enforcement agency" includes, but is not limited 89  
to, a county sheriff's office, the office of a village marshal, 90  
a police department of a municipal corporation, a police force 91  
of a regional transit authority, a police force of a 92  
metropolitan housing authority, the state highway patrol, a 93  
state university law enforcement agency, the office of a 94  
township police constable, and the police department of a 95  
township or joint police district. 96

(5) "Mental impairment" means a substantial disorder of 97  
thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly 98  
impairs judgment, behavior, or ability to live independently or 99

provide self-care as certified by a licensed physician, 100  
psychiatrist, or psychologist. 101

**Section 2.** That existing section 5502.522 of the Revised 102  
Code is hereby repealed. 103

**Section 3.** An alert issued under division (E) (2) of 104  
section 5502.522 of the Revised Code shall be known as a Joshua 105  
Alert. 106