



Representative Scott Wiggam

1st House District

Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chairwoman Conditt, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 115.

Several months ago, a constituent contacted my office with a concern. Her son was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder early in his life, and was now nearing the time when he could begin to drive. With her son's diagnosis, communication barriers unfortunately can hinder social interaction with others. This mother's genuine fear of her son not responding to a stressful situation, such as being pulled over by an officer of the law, may lead to an escalated situation.

To assist Ohioans like her son, and law enforcement officers, Representative Gavarone and I have introduced House Bill 115. This legislation will strengthen families and communities by establishing a voluntary enrollment program where individuals who have been diagnosed with communication disabilities can notify law enforcement of this potential communication hindrance. Law enforcement advocacy groups, such as the Buckeye Sheriff's Association, and disability advocates such as the Deaf Services Center, Disability Rights Ohio, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Arc Ohio, and the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities have joined us in support of this legislation. By providing this information on a voluntary basis, individuals who wish to make law enforcement aware of a potential communication barrier may easily do so, and law enforcement appreciates having this information readily available when approaching an unknown individual.

I am proud of the legislation before you, today. This is a comprehensive bill that serves the most vulnerable, and also assists those who selflessly protect and serve our communities. By accomplishing this mission through utilizing available resources and technology, Ohio is proving once again to be a national leader. I urge you to support passage of this legislation, and I would be more than happy to answer any questions after Representative Gavarone's testimony.