



February 28, 2022

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Ohio Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 242. We appreciate the committee's consideration of this important legislation.

In April 2021, the Autism Society of America formally worked with community members, advocates, fellow disability organizations and its 70 affiliates nationwide to advocate changing April from "Autism Awareness Month," to "**Autism Acceptance Month.**"

Since the 1970's, April has widely been known as "Autism Awareness Month" in the United States as a way to empower Autistic individuals and their families. Words matter. As we work to create a more *accepting* society, we must also accept Autistic individuals for who they are. *Acceptance* is often one of the biggest barriers to being valued and finding and developing a strong support system. Fostering *acceptance* is also critically important to improving opportunities in education, employment, accessible housing, affordable health care and comprehensive long-term services and supports.

Finally, *acceptance* breaks down labels and stigmas and creates more space in our hearts for kindness, care, and advocacy.

Therefore, the Autism Society and its affiliates have formally shifted references to "**Autism Acceptance Month,**" celebrating the lives of 1:44 children (2022 U.S. Centers for Disease Control updated Statistics) and almost 5.5 million adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In 2021, the below affiliates worked with Ohio State Representatives Bob Young and Casey Weinstein to advocate for legislation to support this change. Gov. Mike DeWine also recognized April as "Autism Acceptance Month" in the State of Ohio, citing the importance that all individuals who live on the Autism spectrum be supported to live their fullest life by being included in the many things our great State has to offer.

Proponent Testimony

H.B. 242

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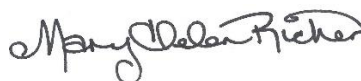
We strongly support House Bill 242 and respectfully request the Ohio House Health Committee to favorably report this legislation out of committee for a full vote by the Ohio House of Representatives.

We wish to especially thank Representatives Young and Weinstein for their support and leadership with this important change. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or any of the signatories, on this letter.

Sincerely,



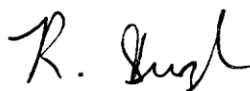
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