

Chair Ghanbari, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee, I am writing this letter to address the need for a statewide voluntary special needs/disability information registry.

The purpose of this should be to help improve outcomes with interactions between individuals with a special need or a disability and first responders. As well as to improve everyone's safety that is involved.

To that end I am in support of H.B 321 and I hope you will consider supporting this bill as well! I have been a police officer in the state of Ohio for over 10 years and counting. I was also a volunteer firefighter prior to that. Most importantly, I am also the parent of a profoundly autistic/epileptic 8yr old son.

My son requires 24/7 one on one support for health and safety reasons. He is very intelligent however due to his disabilities he presently has very limited communication abilities. Which is a mixture of sign language, gestures, picture card use and functional communication such as showing a item/taking a item to a person. Combined with very limited verbal ability at present. My son would struggle to communicate crucial information in the event of a interaction with a first responder.

He would be unable to relay critical information like address, parent name, phone number or even his own own last name. He would not be able to indicate where/if he was injured or what happened. He also could exhibit self-injurious or aggressive behaviors if he is scared, in pain or overwhelmed by the situation or interaction. If first responders are unaware of his medical conditions and disabilities. This behavior could very easily be misunderstood by first-responders which could cause the interaction to end poorly.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I urge you to please support H.B 321

Justin Meade