

As Introduced

134th General Assembly

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H. B. No. 242

Representatives Young, B., Weinstein

Cosponsors: Representatives Lipps, Hoops, Stewart, Brent, Riedel, O'Brien, Galonski, Boggs, Russo, Miller, J., Click, Miranda, Jarrells, Johnson, Schmidt, Lepore-Hagan, Miller, A., Young, T., Jones, Sheehy, Ingram, White, Leland

A BILL

To enact section 5.294 of the Revised Code to 1
designate April as "Autism Acceptance Month." 2

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

Section 1. That section 5.294 of the Revised Code be 3
enacted to read as follows: 4

Sec. 5.294. The month of April is designated as "Autism 5
Acceptance Month." 6

Section 2. Nationally, the first day of April is the 7
beginning of Autism Acceptance Month, which is the month during 8
which our nation recognizes all individuals around the world who 9
live on the autism spectrum. On the first day of April, and 10
every day, the General Assembly celebrates the numerous ways 11
autistic individuals enhance the quality of our communities and 12
enrich our world. As the General Assembly recognizes this 13
important day, the General Assembly reaffirms their fundamental 14
rights to participate fully in society, be treated with dignity 15
and respect, and fulfill their highest potential. 16

For decades, advocates have celebrated April as Autism Awareness Month. Since 2008, the second day of April has been known as "Autism Awareness Day," a designation bestowed by the United Nations, in collaboration with leading disability organizations and millions of advocates across the globe. Now, more than ever, the General Assembly knows that the choice of our words matter and that unity and acceptance are foundational values to move our society forward. The General Assembly now acknowledges the need to advance our language. Awareness provides education and understanding. Acceptance is what is needed to inspire inclusion and systems-wide changes to achieve full participation within society. Thus, the General Assembly is proud to stand alongside the autism community by designating April as "Autism Acceptance Month" in section 5.294 of the Revised Code as enacted by this act.

In the United States, one in fifty-four children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, totaling over five million young people and adults. These individuals are our classmates, colleagues, friends, and loved ones, and they greatly contribute their strengths, talents, and abilities to the community around them. Across the nation, people with autism are able to achieve independence and live purposeful lives when afforded the support system and opportunities that each and every one of us deserves.

As many individuals and families living with autism know, acceptance is often one of the biggest barriers to finding and developing a strong support system. Ohio understands the importance of fostering acceptance to lead to improved supports and to achieve equity in education, employment, housing, health care, and comprehensive long-term services and supports. Ohio believes that everyone should be treated with dignity and have a

fair shot at getting ahead. 48

The General Assembly will continue to prioritize enacting 49
and implementing policies that break down the barriers to access 50
for people with autism and other disabilities living and 51
succeeding in their chosen communities, which means good jobs 52
and more opportunities for employment; affordable, accessible, 53
and integrated housing; accessible and affordable 54
transportation; inclusive voting processes; and any needed long- 55
term services and supports. 56