



## Judiciary

### House Bill 634: Police Training – Autism and Dementia (LEAD Act of 2026)

**Date: February 24, 2026**

#### **Position: SUPPORT WITH SPONSOR'S AMENDMENTS**

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is Maryland's largest autism organization dedicated to helping individuals, parents, and professionals find resources, support, and training while working to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders. We accomplish this through a variety of programs and services with a focus on safety, community, and resources. Our safety programs have a primary focus on the risks of wandering and elopement and include training for caregivers, training for first responders, awareness campaigns, and swimming lesson scholarships. We partner with many organizations to work collaboratively on messaging and complimentary programming to serve not only the autism community, but the broader intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) community across the state.

HB634 would require entrance-level police training, and as determined by the Commission, in-service training regarding individuals with dementia and autism, including training for locating an individual who is wandering, eloping, or otherwise missing; searching near bodies of water; sensory-aware approaches; reunification; documentation; and interagency coordination.

Together with our advocacy partners, including The Arc Maryland, Autism Society of Maryland, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, and the Hussman Institute for Autism, PFA is writing in support of HB634 with the following amendments put forth by the sponsor:

- Page 2, line 9 – 10: (v) Training regarding individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, dementia and autism, including training for:...

PFA and our partners are in support of enhancing training that is currently mandated for understanding individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including

autism. The Maryland Police & Correctional Training Commissions (MPCTC) works closely with community stakeholders, including the Ethan Saylor Alliance, to define training objectives. Under the current Comparative Compliance and Entry Level objectives, 9.06.07 states “Identify search and rescue considerations when a person with a disability has wandered away from a home or facility.”

The amendment ensures that the topics included in item (v) 1-6 are applied to the entire intellectual and developmental disabilities community who are all at increased risk for wandering and elopement. For this reason, PFA and the below signed support HB634 with the inclusion of the sponsor’s amendment.

Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism

Elizabeth Benevides, Hussman Institute for Autism

Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Melissa Rosenberg, Autism Society Maryland