

Support: House Bill 847

State Coordinator for Autism and Advisory Stakeholder Group on Autism-Related Needs

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

As a volunteer fire fighter and an uncle to a child with autism, I support this bill because there is a desperate need to provide additional training for first responders specifically on how to communicate and understand the special needs of people with autism.

Please close your eyes and imagine that you wake up to the sound of your smoke alarm going off, your house is on fire and filling up with smoke. Your heart is probably racing just thinking about it, now take that fear and panic and multiple it by 100... because that is what it would be like for someone with Autism. Now imagine that in all that confusion, a large body approaches you with a helmet and SCBA (face mask) talking to you in a strange voice because of the face mask.

There are many different outcomes for this scenario but the danger to the first responders and the potential victims is real and this bill will provide the resources to help address this situation. I ask you to support this bill for the protection of the first responders and the autism community.

Peter Martin