



8601 Robert Fulton Drive
Suite 140
Columbia, MD 21046
Ph: 401-571-9320
www.thearcmd.org

**SB 885: Motor Vehicle Administration-Records-
Voluntary Disclosure of Developmental Disability**
March 3, 2020, 12 p.m. in the Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Support as Amended by Sponsor

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and we support SB 885.

The bill was modeled after a Connecticut law that became effective last month. The bill would require that the MVA make fillable blue paper cards available for anyone who wishes to voluntarily disclose they have a developmental disability, such as but not limited to autism, that may affect a person's ability to effectively communicate with members of law enforcement.

The cards are meant to be kept with a person's registration and driver's license. On one side of the card, the person with disabilities can include information about his/her/their disability, how they communicate, and any other pertinent information to share with law enforcement personnel. The cards will signal to officers that the driver has a disability and that they may need to communicate differently. The color "blue" is the nationally recognized color for autism awareness. Although not everyone who discloses a disability will have autism, we believe having this color will help the card stand out and will make it easier for members of law enforcement to identify as a voluntary disability disclosure document.

The Ethan Saylor Alliance was created in law a few years ago after the avoidable death of a young man with Down syndrome (Ethan Saylor) at the hands of members of law enforcement. We hope that the Ethan Saylor Alliance can work this card into their trainings with law enforcement personnel so that the implementation of this new "tool" is no more expensive for the state to offer than the cost of paper and printing of the cards. While it is not clear if this card would have aided police in their handling of the situation with Ethan Saylor, it is hoped that the card will help in many other situations, where police encounter a person who does not use words to communicate or has other interaction needs that are not immediately apparent to police. It is just one more tool in our advocacy toolbox as we work together to prevent another tragedy and improve police ability to effectively communicate with people with disabilities. Nothing in the bill is intended to create an electronic record of the voluntary disability disclosure and this aspect of the bill is very important to The Arc Maryland for reasons of individual rights preservation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ande Kolp
Executive Director