

The Honorable Rachel Jones
206 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

March 1, 2022

Dear Delegates R. Jones, Brooks, Foley, Hill, Patterson, and Proctor,

I am writing to urge you to pass the HB 1121, Driver's Licenses, Identification Cards, and Registration Plates – Notation for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Countless studies show autism prevalence in the United States has increased significantly, making autism awareness, education, and acceptance critical. The stigmas associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder create disparity that cause individuals living with the disorder to be overlooked and misrepresented. Individuals living with autism may exhibit non-threatening behaviors such as: pacing, talking to oneself, not making eye contact, have extremely delayed responses, exhibit avoidance, or may walk away. In some cases, the individual may even be nonverbal. As a result, they are misunderstood and are at a higher risk of being hurt or victimized.

Now more than ever, it is important for individuals living with autism to be able to safely live, work, and function independently within their communities. Notation for Autism Spectrum Disorder on driver's licenses, identification cards, and vehicle registration plates will help to ensure the safety of individuals living on the spectrum. Law enforcement officers, first responders, community workers, and citizens will have the ability to quickly identify persons on the spectrum through these notations, which may significantly decrease the potential of fatalities.

As an advocate of the autism community, safety is a critical concern. I know how important it is for individuals with autism to be included, to live independently, and to be protected from harm. This bill is a simple solution that not only helps to communicate a medical and/or special need, but also creates awareness.

As the mother of (2) autistic pre-teens, who may become a licensed driver's one day, I ask that you pass this important legislation. Thank you in advance for your support!

Sincerely,
Parent of (2) pre-teens on the spectrum
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