

HB 1176

HGO

March 8, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Pena- Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and esteemed committee members.

My name is Patti Saylor. You may recall, my son, Ethan, who had Down syndrome, died during an interaction with off duty sheriff deputies in Frederick County in 2013. Since that time many efforts have been made to lessen the risk for such a tragedy. What we have learned is there is no one way to prevent these things but many strategies increase the probability of a positive outcome. Thanks to advocacy work following my son's death we now have required law enforcement training for all entry level academy officers and training for in service officers every three years. And thanks to this body and your senate colleagues, we have the Ethan Saylor Alliance as part of our Maryland Department of Disabilities. The Ethan Saylor Alliance exists to assure the inclusion of people with Intellectual and developmental disabilities in meaningful roles in those training efforts. Training for EMS personnel, Crisis Intervention Training and mobile mental health services have also been enhanced. We are seeing more efforts to prepare people with disabilities to interact safely with first responders. We are also seeing more local community activities between people and law enforcement and first responder agencies aimed at building relationship and hence safety.

People with Intellectual and Developmental disabilities want to feel safe, understood and included in the places they live, work and play. Overall, we have made progress in the last ten years but we must remain vigilant.

With all the gains we have made, individuals and families still fear that risk remains high for a negative interaction when first responders are called for assistance.

Our first responders also face new challenges, staff shortages, high turnover, social pressures, and high demands. We should make every effort to give first responders any and every tool possible to help them respond in a safe and effective manner.

A voluntary 911 registry is another strategy to give people with disabilities and first responders a way to communicate and plan before a crisis.

Voluntary protects the rights of the individual to their privacy and control of their personal information

Having the information available upon first contact with dispatch allows for the responding officer or Ems to have a notion of what they are walking in to and time to prepare their approach.

I encourage you to give HB 1176 a favorable vote. Thank You, Patti Saylor

