



### **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

SB 256: Public Safety – Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission – Revisions

February 6, 2024

### **Positions: Letter of Information**

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) is dedicated to helping individuals, family members, caregivers, and professionals find resources, supports, and training while working to increase intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) awareness and to advocate for the needs of individuals with IDD and their families. In our 24-year history, we have created an education program focused on offering parents and professionals opportunities to learn from experts, and we have developed a robust training program which includes first responders, hospitals, schools, and other industries.

PFA has been teaching the IDD class for law enforcement agencies across Maryland since 2012. To date, we have trained over 17,000 officers in over 800 classes using the curriculum we developed which is certified by the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions (MPCTC).

Senate Bill 256 removes, from statute, the entrance-level police trainings, and every 3-year in-service training requirement about understanding IDD, along with several other topics. Most of the omitted topics are added back in another section of the statute, however the training requirement about interacting with people with IDD is excluded.

This is problematic because the General Assembly created the Ethan Saylor Alliance, which focuses on the need for increased training for law enforcement, and other public service sectors, on the specialized needs of people with IDD. The Police Training and Standards Commission required training about interacting with people with IDD for all entry-level (academy) law enforcement training beginning in 2015. Recognizing the importance of this training, the Commission mandated that all active-duty police officers receive training during in-service. Beginning in 2019, the Commission mandated that the training be included in the three-year cycle of mandated in-service.

Entry level and in-service police training must continue to promote appropriate and effective interactions between law enforcement and people with IDD. We strongly recommend that lines 4-9 and lines 16-17 on page 8 **NOT BE REMOVED**.

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