Good afternoon, my name is Sterling High, and I am testifying today as a former law enforcement officer and a father of two children with hidden disabilities to express my strong support for Eric's ID Law, HB707.

As someone who has served in law enforcement, I know that every encounter carries the potential for misunderstanding, especially when communication barriers exist. Officers are trained to assess situations quickly, but when a person's disability or condition isn't immediately visible, interactions can escalate unnecessarily. Eric's ID Law provides officers with a critical tool—a clear, voluntary designation on a Maryland ID or license—so they can recognize and appropriately respond to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The training included in this bill will not only improve outcomes for people with disabilities but will also help foster trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

As a father, I also know that parents of children with hidden disabilities live with a constant worry: What happens when I'm not there to explain my child's needs? What if they are misunderstood in a moment that could define their future? Eric's ID Law is not about special treatment—it's about equal treatment. It ensures that when my children, and so many others like them, go out into the community, they are treated with the respect, understanding, and grace they deserve.

I urge you to support HB707 because it is a commonsense, compassionate law that will improve interactions between law enforcement and individuals with disabilities. It benefits individuals, families, and officers alike, ensuring safer and more positive outcomes for all.

Thank you.