



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

COUNCILMEMBER LAURIE-ANNE SAYLES

AT LARGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

February 13th, 2025

TO: Chair Will Smith, Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Laurie-Anne Sayles
Montgomery County Councilmember At-Large

RE: SB618, Licenses, Identification Card, and Moped Operator's Permits - Notation of Nonapparent Disability (Eric's ID Law)

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee. My name is Laurie-Anne Sayles, and I proudly serve as an at-large member of the Montgomery County Council, representing over one million residents. In my role as the Council's Lead for Eliminating Disparities in Public Health, I am writing to express my strong support for [SB 618](#), Eric's ID Law.

This bill establishes a voluntary ID program that allows individuals with invisible disabilities to communicate their condition through personal identification cards. For instance, a person with autism could have a card with a logo similar to the heart logo representing organ donors, indicating their condition. This logo would also be added to their driver's license or student ID, informing law enforcement if they have autism, a mental health condition, Alzheimer's disease, a hearing impairment, or similar challenges.

Invisible disabilities are not readily apparent to law enforcement officers, who often rely on their observations to assess situations quickly. They interpret an individual's responses to their environment and inquiries, which can lead to quick assumptions. However, these disabilities can significantly impact a person's reactions and ability to communicate, sometimes resulting in misunderstandings that could escalate an interaction unnecessarily.

Research estimates that [one-third to one-half of all use-of-force incidents](#) in the United States involve civilians with disabilities. [Studies](#) show that individuals with disabilities are more likely to be arrested. Furthermore, this risk is disproportionately higher among different racial and ethnic groups, with Black individuals with disabilities facing the greatest likelihood of arrest.

Clear communication is essential during police stops to maintain calm and ensure the safety of everyone involved. An optional logo on identification cards can provide crucial information about an individual's reactions to various situations, guiding law enforcement in interacting with them appropriately.

Individuals with developmental disabilities are approximately seven times more likely to encounter law enforcement than neurotypical individuals. This law serves as an essential tool for preventing unnecessary escalations during these interactions, ultimately enhancing public safety and reducing the risk of violent or even lethal incidents.

It is important to note that participation in this program is entirely voluntary. It honors the autonomy of individuals with invisible disabilities, enabling them to convey vital information in situations where communication might otherwise be challenging.

We must empower individuals, whether they are nonverbal individuals with autism or those with Alzheimer's displaying erratic behavior, to communicate essential information about themselves. This empowerment is crucial for their safety and peace of mind.

I expressed my disappointment when this bill stalled last year. I commend the Maryland Association of Counties for supporting it, Delegate Wilkins, the cosponsors for their unwavering commitment to reintroducing it this year, and our Chairs in the Senate and House for holding these necessary hearings.

As an elected official and public servant, I have been deeply impressed by Mr. Carpenter-Grantham's advocacy for this critical policy. Navigating these complex issues can be challenging, particularly when residents with lived experiences approach me with their fears and concerns. However, Mr. Carpenter-Grantham has consistently provided invaluable support.

Please pay close attention to today's testimony and take definitive action to equip our residents with the necessary tools for clear communication. The passage of Eric's ID Law has the potential to enhance our community's safety and well-being significantly.

Thank you.

Laurie-Anne Sayles

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurie-Anne Sayles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Montgomery County Councilmember At-Large