



BILL: HB 458

POSITION: FAV - Favorable

COMMITTEE: Government, Labor, and Elections

DATE: March 13, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter of support for **HB 458, General Provisions - Commemorative Months - Water Safety Month**, which requires the Governor to annually proclaim May as Water Safety Month, in order to raise awareness about water safety and drowning prevention.

Studies show that up to 49% of autistic children wander or elope from a safe place. Because of the high lethality of bodies of water, 71% of deaths related to wandering are due to drowning, with 85% of accidental injury deaths among autistic children being drowning related. Beyond disability, drowning is also the leading cause of death nationally for all children ages 1-4, and the second leading cause of death for all children ages 5-14.

The promotion of safe practices, training, skills, and awareness around water safety for families and stakeholders is an essential part of reducing the risks posed by drowning and bodies of water to children with disabilities. Declaring May Water Safety Month and using the opportunity to partner with stakeholders across the state has the potential to save lives through increased awareness.

For these reasons MDOD requests a **favorable report on HB 458**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities