

SB0745 RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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TESTIMONY ON SB#/0745- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Police Training - Autism and Dementia (LEAD Act of 2026)

TO: Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0745, **Police Training - Autism and Dementia (LEAD Act of 2026)**

Psychology Today Magazine's opinion is *Autism and Policing: A Call for Awareness - Autistic individuals deserve safety, not suspicion, from police.*¹

- Police responders to crisis calls in the community need to be more knowledgeable about autism.
- Behavioral crises of people with autism in the community are different from other domestic emergencies.
- Emergency dispatchers can gather information that might reduce the use of lethal force by responding officers.

In Maryland, police interactions with individuals with autism or dementia face critical challenges, including misinterpretation of behaviors (e.g., lack of eye contact, repetitive movement) as defiant, leading to unnecessary force, distress, or injury. Key issues include communication barriers, sensory sensitivity, and a lack of specialized training, often resulting in harmful outcomes rather than necessary assistance.²

Among the new training required regarding individuals with dementia and autism will be training for:

locating an individual who is wandering, eloping, or otherwise missing, searching near bodies of water, sensory-aware approaches, reunification, documentation and interagency coordination

This bill will require the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to require entrance-level and in-service police training to include certain training regarding individuals with dementia and autism.

I respectfully urge this committee to return an favorable report on SB#/0745.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatrys-think-tank/202506/autism-and-policing-a-call-for-awareness#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20some%20individuals%20with,violent%20confrontation%20and%20lethal%20force.>

² Google AI Search "Problems in police interactions with Autism and Dementia individuals in Maryland"