



Shari Bailey

CEO & Founder, Laila's Gift
1040 Hardees Drive
Suite F
Aberdeen, MD 21001
info@lailasgift.org
443-509-4515

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Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 901 — Education – Public School Students – Recognition of External Diagnosis of Autism

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Laila's Gift, we respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 901, which requires public school systems to recognize an external diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder provided by a qualified health care professional when determining eligibility for services and supports.

Laila's Gift works with families of children with autism and other developmental disabilities, many of whom navigate complex educational and safety challenges. Timely recognition of a medically documented autism diagnosis is critically important not only for educational access, but also for ensuring that schools have the information necessary to appropriately plan for student safety, behavioral supports, and individualized needs.

When an autism diagnosis is clearly recognized and incorporated into a student's educational planning — including the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan — schools are better positioned to implement appropriate accommodations, supervision strategies, communication supports, and behavioral interventions. This information is particularly important for children who experience wandering or elopement behaviors, which are well-documented safety risks for individuals with autism. Early and accurate recognition of a student's needs allows school teams to proactively develop safety plans, train staff, and coordinate with families to reduce the risk of dangerous incidents.

Families often pursue diagnostic evaluations outside of the school system due to long wait times or limited availability of specialists. When those diagnoses are not consistently recognized within educational eligibility processes, children may experience delays in services and safety planning, leaving gaps during critical developmental periods. House Bill 901 helps eliminate unnecessary barriers by promoting coordination between medical and educational systems and ensuring that schools have timely access to relevant clinical information.



From a safety perspective, recognizing autism diagnoses and documenting them appropriately within educational plans supports prevention and response strategies when wandering or elopement occurs. Accurate information about a child's communication abilities, sensory needs, triggers, and behaviors can inform staff responses, emergency protocols, and coordination with caregivers and first responders when necessary.

House Bill 901 also complements broader efforts to improve safety and awareness for individuals with autism, including legislation focused on elopement prevention and response.

By improving coordination across systems and reducing delays in service recognition, House Bill 901 supports both educational outcomes and child safety. Early intervention, appropriate supports, and proactive safety planning benefit not only students and families but also educators, schools, and communities.

For these reasons, Laila's Gift respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 901.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm regards,

Shari Bailey
Founder, CEO, Caregiver
Laila's Gift