



OCEAN STATE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

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Dear Chairman Donovan & Members of the House Health & Human Services Committee

I am writing to you as the Executive Director of The Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL). We are Rhode Island's (RI) Resource Center for disability information, resources and services. We have been providing services to the disability community in RI for over 30 years. OSCIL's mission is to work to eliminate the physical & attitudinal barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from full participation in their community.

After reviewing H 5503, we would like to recommend some amendments to the bill. OSCIL supports making available to drivers who voluntarily choose to participate, a placard that provides information regarding ways to enhance communication between a police officer and a person with Autism that could be kept easily visible in the driver's windshield visor, as some drivers who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing already do. This would make the location of the information consistent and easily available during an interaction with law enforcement yet, is less stigmatizing than a blue envelope. OSCIL also supports on-going autism awareness training for members of law enforcement.

We oppose stamping a license with "Autism" as written in the bill. Our concern is that it is an official form of identification. Licenses are shown for many purposes, and this designation would lead to stereotyping and breaches of the individual's confidentiality. The decals mentioned in the bill should be withdrawn for these same reasons.

In summary, while the intent behind the bill to improve interactions with law enforcement is good, we feel there are less intrusive ways to accomplish this goal that would lead to less stigma for persons on the Autism Spectrum. OSCIL is committed to public policy and legislation that strives to eliminate the barriers in our society that create bias towards individuals with disabilities.

OSCIL stands as an ally to promoting disability awareness and inclusion for all. Thank you for your attention to this testimony.

Please feel free to contact me further with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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