

Bill 33-23 Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry  
8.23.23

Good morning Councilmembers and all concerned,

Please receive this official testimony generally in favor of Bill 33-23 which would establish the Voluntary 9-1-1 Registry for those with Autism or other I/DD, MH, Alzheimer's related disabilities. The common thread, you'll note, in most of these challenging diagnoses, is the "invisible" aspect of the symptoms.

Therefore, the existence of an easily accessible, perhaps CAD registry, would be extremely helpful to First Responders. If an officer or mental health worker can enter a situation or crisis where autism or I/DD is involved, they can tailor their approach from the first contact.

I've seen first-hand how just an officer in uniform can heighten anxiety in an individual with Autism+ diagnoses. Sometimes, even if they approach slowly, quietly and with a smile, unanticipated visual cues of officer defensiveness, officer stress in raised shoulders, a confused look or a fast-paced walk, can escalate emotions of a person with Autism. A First Responder or officer knowing ahead of time, what they are responding to, will allow them to adjust their interactions, body position, breathing, as they approach.

On the flip side, to fully understand and balance all sides of this proposed bill there are a few points needing consideration.

1) If it is voluntary, then parents and caregivers should not be the ones entering information on their adult children without their consent. This needs to be the choice of the individual, unless they are under 18 years of age. This data base would ideally inform responders about self-advocates whose challenges are truly invisible, are independent in the community and oftentimes capable of driving. Many of those self-advocates do not take part in self-disclosure.

2) Since efforts of the "Reimagine/Defund the Police" advocates caused dozens of resignations/retirements to our local law enforcement agencies, we need to make sure the development of this data base does not pull manpower from the ECC. I would suggest a position (full or part time/civilian or not) established to manage the data base to do it correctly. To engage with families to assist if necessary. Please be sure to lay an appropriate groundwork and funding so this can be established and sustained properly. *(The county would benefit from an Autism/I/DD expert on staff or contracted to work with all emergency response efforts, this included.)*

3) Is there any liability risk to consider? If someone is in the data base and officers respond in a way indicating they don't know the background of the autistic individual, then what happens? A family will say they updated the data base to prevent a stressful interaction from

happening... but the information never made it to the officer for whatever reason. Just another angle to consider.

Just trying to cover all the bases for consideration. Overall, I love the idea. Implementation needs to be thoughtful and careful.

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