



AN ACT FACILITATING BETTER INTERACTIONS BETWEEN POLICE OFFICERS AND PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

H.3655 / S.2348 , filed by Rep. Domb, Rep. Garballey, and Sen. Comerford

This bill aims to facilitate understanding and communication between law enforcement and individuals with autism. It would allow drivers or vehicle passengers who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to voluntarily request a blue envelope that contains important information to assist in the event of a traffic stop. The bill is supported by the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, The State Police Association of Massachusetts Troopers, and the Municipal Police Institute.

CONTEXT

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is often associated with communication and social interaction difficulties, repetitive behaviors, and increased sensitivities. Without adequate training, law enforcement could misread the actions of an individual with autism and interpret them as evasive or threatening (examples: stimming, bolting).
- According to the [Autism Society](#), 1 in 5 young adults with autism will interact with a police officer before the age of 21. Far too many of these events result in inappropriate use of force, trauma, or death. This is particularly true for neurodiverse people of color.
- Several states have implemented similar programs including CT, NJ, NY, and CA. The MA State Police started a [Blue Envelope program](#) in 2024 after working with The Arc of Massachusetts and others. This bill, however, is still critically important to ensure that this initiative is codified into law and consistently applied across Massachusetts.

THE BILL

- Requires the registry of motor vehicles, in consultation with law enforcement and organizations that advocate for people with ASD, to make blue envelopes available.
- The envelope could hold a driver's license, registration, insurance papers, and specific information on the driver's diagnosis, impairments, and triggers. The envelope could also include emergency contact information and reminders to the driver on what to do during an interaction with law enforcement.

THE IMPACT

Many individuals who have autism drive independently or ride in a car with a family member, friend or loved one. Police officers can misinterpret behaviors common for neurodivergent individuals as dangerous. The blue envelope is a simple, cost-effective tool to increase understanding and ensure communicative and safe interactions between law enforcement and autistic drivers.

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