

AN ACT RELATIVE TO POLICE INTERACTIONS WITH PERSONS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

H.2686 / S.1741, filed by Rep. D. Rogers, and Sen. Moore

This bill requires in-service training for law enforcement officers and corrections officers focused on appropriate interactions with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including autism. The bill also ensures guidelines for law enforcement responses to individuals with IDD who are victims of or witnesses to crimes.

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, nonverbal communication, bolting).
- Nationwide, according to the [Prison Policy Initiative](#), people with disabilities are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. About 25% of incarcerated people have an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) or learning disorder.
- 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.

THE BILL

- Requires that the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC) establish an in-service training curriculum for current law enforcement officers and corrections officers to learn appropriate strategies for interacting with people with IDD.
- The 2-hour training would focus on communication and sensory processing differences, de-escalation techniques, appropriate interrogation and interview methods, arrest and restraint guidelines, and more. This training would also cover responses to individuals who are witnesses to or victims of a crime as well as those accused of a crime.
- In addition, corrections officers would be required to learn tools to ensure the safety of individuals with autism in correctional facilities.

THE IMPACT

Individuals with IDD are overrepresented in the criminal legal system, and their behavior can be misunderstood. Our law enforcement professionals deserve the appropriate tools and resources to successfully work with this community. Importantly, this bill would also allow individuals with autism to be presenters in the trainings.

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