

RE: SB380

Dear Honorable Legislators,

The Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders is a group of Governor-appointed volunteers that strive to improve the lives of people impacted by autism spectrum disorders (ASD). We are writing to ask for your support of SB380.

In 1990 the rate of autism was one child in 2,500. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the rate of autism is now one in 36 children. Furthermore, for every five children with ASD four of them are boys. According to Nevada EdFacts in 2023 there were 12,546 students in Nevada at public schools with an eligibility of ASD. ASD is a spectrum disorder with some individuals actively employed with families and yet others unable to live independently. Since the Olmstead Decision of 1999 people with significant disabilities (including ASD) are choosing community life instead of institutionalization. With more teens and adults with ASD living in Nevada's communities, it is important that our peace officers can recognize autism specific traits and respond with alternative strategies to help suspects and victims.

People with autism may not respond appropriately to pronouns or prepositions. They may take longer to process a command. They are likely to respond in a literal manner, instead of generalizing to a specific situation. They are likely to misread facial expressions or tone of voice. People with autism may elope from situations that they interpret as dangerous, but such an environment may not be considered dangerous by the general public.

People with ASD may be unable to read dangerous situations. They may become the victim of a crime. In such an unfortunate event, peace officers would benefit from understanding how a person with ASD may respond and how to help guide them to safety.

In addition to requiring peace officer training, SB380 also helps build the workforce that treat people with ASD. Children who receive timely Applied Behavior Analysis by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT) will gain skills to be successful in their school and community.

Sadly, the workforce of RBT's is insufficient in Nevada. Candidates to become an RBT must take a 40 hour class, work under the direct supervision of a BCBA, take a National Certification test, and become registered in Nevada's state registry. This last step is taking 12-18 weeks. During this wait-time RBT candidates are leaving the field, because RBT is an entry-level job, not a career. With a time consuming start up, people leave.

SB380 helps build the workforce by permitting RBT candidates to submit their National Certification and background check and begin working straight away under the direct supervision of their BCBA. By reducing the wait time to begin employment, RBT's will stay in the profession.

The CASD asks you to support SB380 to train our peace officers to recognize and respond to people with ASD and to build our RBT workforce.

Thank you