

Testimony Re: Joey's Law, SB 74

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Grant Day

2417 N. Lindberg

Wichita, KS 67226

316-636-9682

grantpday@att.net

Hello, my name is Grant Day. Outwardly, I am a rather typical teenager, concerned more with my grades and my friends than with complicated policy debates. However, as someone who lives with autism, I am often confronted with the reality that I need accommodations to live such a normal life. Accommodations to assist people with autism can range from paraprofessional support in schools to guide dog support. One particularly stark reminder of the importance of accommodations came when Joey Weber, a man who had autism, was shot and killed by a police officer. This story is profoundly depressing, but it could lead to a positive change in the form of Joey's Law, which would help people with autism in situations involving law enforcement. I am here to support Joey's Law because everyone should have the opportunity to live a normal life without fear of violence.

Imagine the situation: you are driving down the road to go to work, and everything appears to be normal. You notice flashing lights in the rear-view mirror. You pull over, waiting for further instructions from the officer. You eventually talk politely to the officer, who either punishes you or lets you off with a warning. This is the typical scenario, but it does not apply to everyone. Keep in mind that being pulled over in a car by an armed law enforcement figure can be a dangerous situation if handled poorly by either party. A wrong move can lead to violent results. People with autism, while generally peaceful, sometimes panic in such high intensity situations. I can personally relate to that last point albeit in a different context.

Last year, I went to prom for the first time. My family and I took numerous precautions before I went, but we failed to take something into account: people with autism are highly sensitive to loud noise. Because of the loud music, I had a complete meltdown in public. I cried and screamed. I behaved very differently than I normally would. These stressful situations can turn those like me into completely different people. Considering how dangerous law enforcement encounters can be, I think that the changes proposed in Joey's Law are urgently needed.

In conclusion, people with autism, such as myself, are capable of living productive and even normal lives. However, we need additional support in order to become successful members of society. This includes accommodations during encounters with law enforcement. I believe that Joey's Law would not only protect people with autism during police stops, but would signal a growing willingness to provide much needed accommodations to people like me.