

Written Testimony of

Jennifer Smith, parent/guardian of two adults living with Autism

Submitted to Kansas Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

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*Jennifer Smith
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Dear Chairwoman Beverly Gossage and other members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding SB 287, a bill to add developmental disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder, to the Kansas silver alert plan.

As a parent of two adults living with different levels of Autism, I am very aware of how a sudden change in behavior or a situation that could scare, frighten my two adult children to cause them to bolt from their house, their public setting or any location. Wandering has been one of my biggest fears for my two children since they were diagnosed 26 years ago.

I slept for 8 years on my couch to make sure my son would not wander out of the house when he was little. I had locks and chimes on my doors to keep him safe. And now that they are older I have placed security cameras on the outside of all the door locations. All my neighbors, since my children were 3 years old, knew about my children. They knew that if they saw them outside without me they knew to call me and also watch over my kids. Now that they are adults, I still have to keep them safe and everyday make sure systems are in place to keep my children safe. Even to educate the local Police, Fire and First Responders on Corinne and Cameron so they know how to respond if they need to respond to the house or if they see them in public.

Being an advocate for the Autism Community since 1998, past Executive Director for The Autism Society the Heartland, Regional Walk Manager for Autism Speak, Executive Director for Just Like You- Autism Film and part of the team to help pass

the Autism Insurance Bill for Kansas, I have been active in our community and our state for many years. This Bill to add IDD and those living with Autism to the Silver Alert is so incredibly important to be able to give key information when a loved one might be missing and how to respond and be able to bring our loved ones home safe. This is good policy making and because a child with autism grows, they become adults with autism and many individuals do not have the cognitive abilities to communicate or be able to understand they are even lost and in danger. Please hear our voices representing our loved ones and pass SB 287.

Thank you,

Proud Parent of Corinne and Cameron

Jennifer Smith

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