



Expanding Law Enforcement Awareness for Safer Interactions

How the Proposed Vehicle Registration Indicator Builds Upon the Current Program

Current Texas Driving with Disability Program	Proposed Vehicle Registration Indicator Expansion
Primarily focuses on communication impairments.	Includes communication, neurological, developmental, sensory, and medical conditions.
Primarily benefits drivers.	Can benefit both drivers and passengers.
Information is tied to an individual participant.	Information is associated with the vehicle registration.
Assists officers with communication challenges.	Assists officers with communication, safety, and medical emergency awareness.
Focuses largely on communication-related disabilities.	Includes autism, hearing loss, epilepsy, diabetes, intellectual disabilities, and other conditions.
Primarily addresses communication during encounters.	Addresses communication, emergency response, and de-escalation during traffic stops or other law enforcement interactions.
Requires officers to identify the disability designation associated with the individual.	Information could be available when the license plate is run before contact is made.
Limited population served.	Potentially benefits multiple disability and medical communities.



TEXAS SB 976: THE SAMUEL ALLEN LAW

Texas Senate Bill 976: The Samuel Allen Law allows drivers with autism, deafness, PTSD, or other communication-related impairments to voluntarily disclose that information through their Texas Department of Motor Vehicles records. When a law enforcement officer runs the driver's information during a traffic stop, the alert can help the officer understand that the driver may communicate, respond, or react differently under stress.



PROS

Improves officer awareness and responses.

Officers can be informed before approaching a vehicle that the driver may have communication challenges or may need additional time to respond. Participation is optional.

KEY BENEFITS

- ✓ Provides officers with information before approaching a vehicle.
- ✓ May improve communication and reduce misunderstandings.
- ✓ May help officers recognize medical emergencies, such as diabetic episodes or post-seizure confusion.
- ✓ Could assist families transporting autistic children and adults or individuals with disabilities who do not drive.
- ✓ Voluntary, opt-in participation.
- ✓ Potential support from autism, epilepsy, diabetes, hearing loss, and intellectual disability advocacy organizations.



CONCERNS AND LIMITATIONS

Does not adequately address passengers with disabilities.

One of the most significant concerns is that the law applies only to the licensed driver whose information is connected to the vehicle or driver's license record. It does not alert officers that a passenger may have autism, a developmental disability, PTSD, deafness, or another condition that could affect communication or behavior.

This is important because a passenger may become overwhelmed, agitated, frightened, nonverbal, or appear unresponsive during a traffic stop. Without advance awareness, an officer could misinterpret those reactions as noncompliance or a safety threat.



SUMMARY

The intent is not to replace the Texas Driving with Disability Program, but to expand upon it by providing law enforcement with additional information that may improve safety, communication, and emergency response while preserving individual choice through a voluntary opt-in system.