



February 6, 2024

TO: Chair Gossage and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

FR: Nick Wood, Associate Director, InterHab

RE: SB 371 - Expanding the Kansas silver alert plan to provide public notice of missing persons 18 years of age or older who have an intellectual disability

Chair Gossage and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share information on behalf of the member organizations of InterHab. Our members serve Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in every part of the state.

Senate Bill 371 will expand the criteria for the state's Silver Alert public notification system to include those who are 18 years of age or older with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). Similar to the way an Amber Alert notifies the public about child abductions, Silver Alerts allow law enforcement to reach more people via phone notification and broadcast alerts on TV and radio. Our state has lacked a coordinated, statewide effort focused on recovering missing people with ID. This bill would help to make recovery efforts more successful and ensure people with ID are safer.

We believe that expanding Silver Alerts to include Individuals with ID will also help co-responders be more aware of the needs of this population whenever they have an unplanned encounter. People with ID often have difficulty understanding social cues and interacting with strangers. They may be very uncomfortable with things that are not familiar to them. The chances of contact with law enforcement are higher with this population. According to a 2017 study, by age 21, approximately 20% of those with autism had been stopped and questioned by police and nearly 5% had been arrested.

As people with ID age, they have higher risk of experiencing early symptoms of Alzheimer's or Dementia such as higher levels of general anxiety. Added to this, adults with ID are more likely to experience residential transitions as they age. Multiple moves in residences are linked to higher levels of anxiety and behavioral issues such as wandering. Those with more severe levels of disability are more likely to need assistance the Silver Alert will provide.

Thank you to the committee for holding a hearing on this matter. Many other states across the country have passed similar laws to expand Silver Alerts to include ID. We look forward to our state joining this national trend.

Thank you to the committee for hearing this bill.