

Supporting Blue Envelopes Program Act (S.4089/H.R.6602) Summary

For many autistic individuals, interactions with law enforcement and police officers can be panic inducing, overwhelming, and scary. Research shows that autistic adults have an increased likelihood of interacting with police officers and experiencing misunderstandings during these interactions (Weiss & Fardella, 2018). Communication differences or difficulties can quickly escalate into crises, which underscores the need for comprehensive training and crisis response procedures.

The bipartisan Supporting Blue Envelopes Act (S.4089/H.R.6602) aims to allocate federal funding for the Blue Envelopes Program nationwide. It provides individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and other disorders with identifiable envelopes that hold necessary information like driver's licenses, emergency contacts, and proof of insurance. This bill was introduced in the House and Senate by Congresswoman Norma J. Torres (D-CA-35) and Congressman John Rutherford (R-FL-05), along with Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Eric Schmitt (R-MO).

The Autism Society of America supports this bill that has several components to increase positive interactions between disabled individuals and law enforcement. This bill:

- Allocates \$5 million for law enforcement agencies to expand the Blue Envelopes Program across the nation from 2027 to 2031.
- Supplies individuals with blue envelopes with important information, as well as identifiable items like lanyards or pins to foster safer interactions with law enforcement.
- Creates an incentive for law enforcement to partner with non-profits to provide training and resources for interactions with disabled individuals, especially those with Autism or other intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- Offers training to police officers, community members, and families.
- Does not include any type of registration or tracking system to ensure privacy and protection of individuals and their families.