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Rep. Linehan Applauds House Passage of Police Training Program on Children with Autism *Training based on successful Cheshire program*



Rep. Linehan introduces HB 6260 on the House floor

State Rep. Liz Linehan (D-Cheshire/Southington/Wallingford) applauded the House's passage today of a bill she introduced to create a state-wide police training program on best practices for locating and communicating with children with autism who wander from home or adult supervision. Today is Autism Awareness Day at the Capitol.

HB 6260 is based on Logan's Project in Cheshire, which **Rep. Linehan** created after hearing about Logan Gibbons, a 16-year old autistic boy from Southington with a history of wandering away from home. Logan and his family testified in favor of the bill in front of the Public Safety and Security Committee in February.

“Logan’s Project in Cheshire has been very successful in providing police training on this issue, and this bill would make it a resource available state-wide. It’s for the safety of children with autism – who often don’t respond to traditional search techniques – and to provide our police officers with another tool at their disposal,” **Rep. Linehan** said. “The Gibbons have been incredible advocates for this training. They have taken what is truly a terrifying experience for any parent and used their story to help other families.”

Many children with autism spectrum disorder attempt to wander from a safe, supervised space. Known as elopement, autistic children engage in this behavior at a rate much higher than their peers and often wander towards water, leading to higher rates of death by drowning for autistic children.

“There is little that is more distressing for a parent than to have a missing child,” said **Speaker of the House Joe Aresimowicz** (D-Berlin/Southington). “Knowing that law enforcement is properly trained, prepared, and understanding of special circumstances that are involved is both helpful in reassuring parents and bringing a child home safe. Representative Linehan deserves a lot of credit for championing passage in the House of this thoughtful, important bill, particularly accomplishing this in her first year.”

“Research has shown that half of the children with an autism spectrum disorder attempt to wander from a safe place. This bill will help law enforcement interact with individuals that are non-verbal,” **Rep. Cathy Abercrombie** (D-Meriden) said.

“I am pleased to have worked with my colleagues to write a bill that helps train our future police officers in how to best assist juveniles on the autism spectrum or who are non-verbal. In my advocacy for awareness of Angelman’s Syndrome, I understand how children who are non-verbal require a unique set of skills to help them,” said **Rep. JP Sredzinski** (R-Monroe/Newtown). “Further, this bill does not take away from any other training and does not cost the state or towns any additional money. It’s a true win/win for our state and our children.”

Although the legislation is aimed at helping children with autism, **Rep. Linehan** noted in her testimony on the bill that it could also benefit people who have other developmental disorders or are non-verbal.

When children with autism go missing, typical police methods of locating a child – such as the use of lights and loud sounds – may not be effective. The legislation would establish a training program that police officers could complete for credit toward their continuing education requirements.

After receiving training through Logan’s Project, Cheshire police safely returned Logan to his family when he wandered 11 miles from his Southington home into Cheshire.

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