

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

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HOUSE BILL 581

Short Title: Drivers License Designation/Autism. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Penny, Greene, and Miller (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Transportation, if favorable, Finance, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 19, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO DIRECT THE DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES TO DEVELOP A
DESIGNATION FOR DRIVERS LICENSES THAT MAY BE GRANTED UPON
REQUEST TO A PERSON WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 20-7 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(q3) Autism Spectrum Disorder Designation. – The Division shall develop, in consultation with the Department of Public Safety, the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, and the State Highway Patrol, and pursuant to this subsection, a drivers license designation that may, upon request, be granted to a person with autism spectrum disorder, as defined in G.S. 58-3-192(a)(2). The Division shall comply with the following requirements applicable to the designation:

(1) At the request of a person with autism spectrum disorder, the Division shall place a unique symbol on the front of the person's license. The unique symbol placed on the license shall not include any further descriptor. The Division shall record the designation in the electronic record associated with the person's drivers license.

(2) At the request of a person with autism spectrum disorder, the Division shall enter the drivers license symbol and a descriptor into the electronic record of any motor vehicle registered in the same name of the person with autism spectrum disorder.

(3) For the purposes of this subsection, a person shall be considered to have autism spectrum disorder if the person provides verification or documentation substantiating a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder that is recommended by the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services as acceptable. The Division of Motor Vehicles shall consult with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services to identify acceptable forms of verification that do not result in undue burden to the person requesting the designation of autism spectrum disorder. Acceptable documentation shall include any of the following:

a. Documentation of certification or examination by a medical, health, or mental health professional showing evidence of autism spectrum disorder.



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- b. An affidavit executed by the person, their parent, or guardian attesting to the person's autism spectrum disorder.
- c. Documentation deemed by the Division of Motor Vehicles to qualify as satisfactory proof of the person's autism spectrum disorder.
- (4) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as authorizing the issuance of a drivers license to a person ineligible under G.S. 20-9.
- (5) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as prohibiting the issuance of a drivers license to a person otherwise eligible under the law.
- (6) Any individual who chooses to register or not to register shall not be deemed to have waived any protections under the law.
- (7) Information collected under this subsection shall only be available to law enforcement and only for the purpose of ensuring mutually safe interactions between law enforcement and persons with autism spectrum disorder. It shall not be accessed or used for any other purpose.
- (8) The right to make the decision for inclusion or removal of the designation from the database is entirely voluntary and shall only be made by the person who holds the drivers license associated with the designation.
- (9) The Division, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services, shall develop a process for removal of the designation authorized by this subsection that is available online, by mail, or in person."

SECTION 2. G.S. 17C-6 reads as rewritten:

"§ 17C-6. Powers of Commission.

(a) In addition to powers conferred upon the Commission elsewhere in this Article, the Commission shall have the following powers, which shall be enforceable through its rules and regulations, certification procedures, or the provisions of G.S. 17C-10:

- ...
- (17) Establish minimum educational and training standards for employment and continuing education for criminal justice officers ~~concerning~~concerning both of the following:
 - a. Recognizing and appropriately interacting with (i) persons who are deaf or hard of ~~hearing~~hearing and (ii) persons with autism spectrum disorder.
 - b. Drivers license and vehicle registration identifiers of (i) persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, as authorized by G.S. 20-7(q2), or (ii) persons with autism spectrum disorder, as authorized by G.S. 20-7(q3), including that those identifiers are optional.

...."

SECTION 3. G.S. 17E-4 reads as rewritten:

"§ 17E-4. Powers and duties of the Commission.

(a) The Commission shall have the following powers, duties, and responsibilities, which are enforceable through its rules and regulations, certification procedures, or the provisions of G.S. 17E-8 and G.S. 17E-9:

- ...
- (13) Establish minimum educational and training standards for employment and continuing education for officers ~~concerning~~concerning both of the following:
 - a. Recognizing and appropriately interacting with (i) persons who are deaf or hard of ~~hearing~~hearing and (ii) persons with autism spectrum disorder.
 - b. Drivers license and vehicle registration identifiers of (i) persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, as authorized by G.S. 20-7(q2), or (ii)

1 persons with autism spectrum disorder, as authorized by
2 G.S. 20-7(q3), including that those identifiers are optional.
3"
4 **SECTION 4.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to drivers licenses
5 issued on or after January 1, 2022.