**TRAVIS ALERT LAW**

The Travis Alert idea came about when my husband, (an EMT for 20+ years and a firefighter for the lower valley), and I wanted to let our local first responders know about our son, Travis.

Travis has autism, he’s a runner, drawn to water and has very little expressive language or communication skills. We thought there really needs to be a simple way to be able to give the responders a heads up about Travis if they were ever called to our house. We thought maybe by painting a blue puzzle piece on the mailbox at the end of our driveway it would alert the first responders Travis has autism and they could silence the sirens and turn their radios down when they would come into the house. The Blue puzzle piece is the symbol for Autism (“until all the pieces fit”).

Darren, my husband, painted the blue puzzle piece on our mailbox and I posted a picture of it on Facebook. Who would have thought that mailbox picture would get over 110K shares? I couldn’t believe these people were messaging me about how they need to get this in different states and how can they support this? People were writing to me asking how they could do this in their town and how could we let the responders know more information about the loved ones that lived there. This was just for autism! I was shocked by how many people thought this was a great idea and how each one of them wanted to be involved.

I shared all this information with my sister and asked her what she thought. She said I needed to talk to my local state representative and gave me her number. The next day I called and talked to Representative Gina McCabe and told her about my concerns and how this picture of the puzzle piece went viral in only a few short weeks. There were so many people who had the same concerns that Darren and I did.

By the time Representative Gina McCabe and I had put together the "Autism Bill" and were ready to have it registered, Gina was receiving hundreds of email and phone calls about how people with other disabilities would like this bill to include them as well. Rep. Gina, Darren and I didn’t hesitate with what we needed to do. We got rid of the “Autism Bill” and started over with a Bill or Act that would encompass all disabilities. The Travis Alert Act HB2287 is being named after Travis because if it wasn’t for him this bill wouldn’t have been started. We decided to keep the puzzle piece symbol in honor of Travis but change the color to safe orange and the exclamation point is to represent an alert.

The bill went through Judiciary and Appropriations Committees, and was voted out of the House of Representatives with nearly 100% all yes votes. The Travis Alert Act then went on to the Senate to be voted on in Human Services, Mental Health, Housing, Ways and Means, and then Rules. It went all the way to the Senate to be voted on but ran out of time before the legislative session ended.

We continued to work on the bill to make it a stronger. We met with the health department, firefighters, law enforcement, medical responders and dispatchers about how they felt this could help them on calls. The following year we started the process all over again. We registered the Travis Alert Act for All Disabilities HB1258. The bill went through the process of Judiciary and Appropriations Committees and again it passed with nearly 100% yes votes. On to the Senate where we testified in Judiciary, Law and Justice, then Ways and Means.

The bill passed the Senate with 100% yes votes and the Lt. Governor said as he passed the bill, “The name of the bill will be the name of the Law!” My heart started pounding so hard when I heard this because usually the name of the bill is changed, but this time it got to stay the same!

My family had made more than 15 overnight trips in two years to Olympia for this bill, but today it was just Travis and me sitting on the balcony when we heard and saw the vote. After they voted, the Lt. Governor, who is blind, asked the Senate to please recognize Travis and I because we were dedicated to seeing this bill through till the end.

All the Senators turned toward us and applauded, it took my breath away and as the tears ran down my cheeks, I felt truly honored.

On May 16th, 2017 at 10:30 am Governor Jay Inslee signed the Travis Alert Act into a Law. We had 21 friends, family members, and supporters with us, who traveled to Olympia that day to be there for the signing of the law.

The Travis Alert Law is a two-part law. The first part of the law is to allow people who want to put their, or their loved one’s, information into the already established 911 system*. Then, if you call from your home, cell phone, or if in an accident they can run your license plate number, the first responders will have a little extra information to help them in an emergent situation.

The second part of the law is to make sure all responders have training on how to help with people who have different disabilities including mental health, medical, sensory, neurological and physical. When the Washington State Budget passes we will start working with the Washington State Health Department, Law Enforcement, and other stakeholders to get all the training in order and how you will be able to add your information into the 911 system.

For example, if Travis calls from his cell phone, or mine, a “pop-up” will say something like:

- Travis King
- 13-year-old male
- Autism
- Nonverbal/communication issues /some language
- Drawn to water
- Runner

If they need more information it can be provided on a different page such as a picture, medications, emergency contact information and whatever you feel you would like to provide. There will be more information to come and I am hoping to offer classes on how the Travis Alert Law will work and how we can enter your information.

*While you can already add your information to 911, the dispatchers have to dig through several different pages on the screen to get to the information. The Travis Alert will provide a “pop up” or a “flag” to be shown when someone is calling from a registered number, then the important information will be easily found and can be given to the first responders.