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LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH THE ETHAN SAYLOR CENTER FOR SELF-ADVOCATES RECEIVES HEARING IN ANNAPOLIS

Pioneering center will prepare people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to participate in training programs for law enforcement and other public sectors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Annapolis, MD (March 12, 2015) – Senator Ron Young (D-Frederick) and Del. Carol Krimm (D-Frederick) introduced legislation (SB 853 and HB 1161) to establish the Ethan Saylor Center for Self-Advocates as Educators. The Saylor Center was a key recommendation of the Commission for Effective Community Inclusion of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in its December 2014 Annual Report. The Inclusion Commission was formed following the tragic death of Ethan Saylor, a young man who happened to have Down syndrome, who died in the custody of three off-duty Frederick County sheriffs in January, 2013.

Disability advocates push for passage

The Commission recommended a Maryland university house the new Saylor Center. The Saylor Center would recruit, prepare, and coordinate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to participate as trainers in a variety of trainings across the public sector, with an initial focus on training for law enforcement. Beginning in 2015, all police academies in Maryland must include training on intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DDs). The Inclusion Commission recommended that self-advocates participate in such training, but the need for qualified trainers far exceeds the current availability.

“Our family is simply amazed and honored to witness such effective collaboration between disability advocates, law enforcement professionals, individuals with disabilities and their families and members of prominent state agencies. Collectively the Commission's decision to support self advocates to lead the way is nothing short of brilliant,” said Ethan’s Mother Patti Saylor

"Maryland has a true opportunity here to show the country how we come together in crisis and produce positive change. Communities are stronger when we come together and people are safer when they know and understand each other," Ms. Saylor continued.

The creation of the Saylor Center is an important part of addressing officer safety when interacting with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to improve their

ability to protect and serve these individuals. “The Frederick Police Department remains committed to providing comprehensive training to its officers through interaction with members of the community with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This not only raises awareness but also fosters an atmosphere of service both in and out of uniform,” said Captain Patrick Grossman, Acting Chief of Police for the Frederick Police Department.

In its 2014 Annual Report, the Commission stated that it is the relationships that develop between people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the officers and other members of the public sector that will lead to greater understanding and inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Whether we are training police officers, educators, bus drivers or hospital staff, self-advocates telling their own stories in their own voices is a critical element for training people about how to communicate with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” said Commission Chair and Kennedy Foundation Trustee Timothy Shriver. “The Saylor Center establishes Maryland as a leader in inclusion and honors Ethan’s memory by ensuring that the voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are heard in all walks of State government,” continued Shriver, who is also the Chairman of Special Olympics

The Center would be a first in the nation to be part of State government and sends a strong message that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities play a central role in any training about appropriately and effectively interacting with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Erica Wheeler, Commission member and self-advocate, said of the Center, “We are not asking for help. We are asking to help others in our own community, so we can be the best leaders we can be.”

In addition to training self-advocates, the Center would identify and disseminate national, state and local training best practices regarding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as trainers and educators. The legislation establishes a Governing Board that would oversee the Center and the effectiveness of training programs that include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"We are a grateful family to have had Ethan and we are proud to support the establishment of The Center for Self Advocate Educators named in his honor," said Saylor.

The Inclusion Commission strongly believes that the participation of self-advocates as trainers and teachers will ensure that any training is both effective and meaningful for law enforcement and other members of the public sector.

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