

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 469

By Carter

A RESOLUTION to recognize and commend Captain Skyler Phillips for his involvement with the Take Me Home program.

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of the members of this General Assembly to acknowledge and applaud those Tennesseans whose conscientious and compassionate actions help to make this State a better and safer place in which to work and live; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Captain Skyler Phillips of the Chattanooga Fire Department, an intrepid community leader who has made significant strides toward ensuring the safety and well-being of both first responders and individuals with disabilities throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, Captain Phillips's work as a firefighter has intersected with his personal life in such a way that it has allowed him to become one of Tennessee's leading advocates for those with disabilities; because his son is on the autism spectrum, Captain Phillips is deeply aware of the needs of those with autism and other developmental disabilities, and he has trained other firefighters and first responders in how to best interact with these individuals in high-stress and crisis situations; and

WHEREAS, Take Me Home is an important safety program that Captain Skyler Phillips helped establish in Chattanooga; this program allows family members and legal guardians to register emergency contact information for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, which first responders can then access in emergency situations; and

WHEREAS, the program is free and voluntary, and all registered information is kept confidential; Chattanooga-area caregivers can easily enroll family members, friends, or clients with disabilities in the Take Me Home database online; and

WHEREAS, for those caregivers of and individuals with autism or other developmental or intellectual disabilities, the possibility of these individuals becoming lost or separated from their caregivers is a real concern, a situation that could result in dangerous consequences; and

WHEREAS, when a vulnerable individual is found wandering alone or has been reported missing, police and other emergency services personnel can search the Take Me Home database for contact information, a detailed physical description, and the individual's photograph; and

WHEREAS, this information is vital to the safety of the individual, as many who have autism, dementia, Alzheimer's, and other disabilities may be unable to communicate and thus are unable to tell anyone where or who they are; the information in the Take Me Home database will allow the officer or emergency services personnel member to take that person home instead of to a jail cell; and

WHEREAS, Take Me Home was initiated with the support of advocates in the Chattanooga autism community, including Roddey Coe of Ooltewah, who is a governor-appointed member of the Council of Developmental Disabilities and a 2017-2018 graduate of the Council's Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute; Mr. Coe also has a son with autism; and

WHEREAS, the Council of Developmental Disabilities, Roddey Coe, Captain Phillips, and other stakeholders are continuing to explore making the Take Me Home program available in communities across the State; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Take Me Home program, Captain Skyler Phillips has been integral in the implementation of SNAP (Special Needs Awareness Program) in Chattanooga; SNAP is a first responder training course developed by Lisa Mattheiss of LifeLine, a family support entity in Chattanooga, and is based on scenarios encountered by families who experience disability; and

WHEREAS, Captain Phillips has taught SNAP to more than 2,000 first responders across the State and in Georgia; he also collaborated with the Hamilton County 911 system to

ensure that those with disabilities are noted in the system so that if a call is received from their residence, the 911 operators will know how to best respond; and

WHEREAS, Captain Skyler Phillips has been an invaluable champion for those with disabilities in Chattanooga and throughout Tennessee, and it is most fitting that he be honored at this time; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize and commend Captain Skyler Phillips for his important work to implement and sustain the Take Me Home program, commend him for his continued commitment to make Tennessee a safer place for those with disabilities, and extend to him our best wishes for his continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.