



# PATRICK TESTIN

## STATE SENATOR

**DATE:** January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
**RE:** **Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 415**  
**TO:** The Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs  
**FROM:** Senator Patrick Testin

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Thanks to Chairman Petrowski and the members of this committee for your willingness to consider my testimony on Senate Bill 415 (SB 415). This bill, known as Collin's Law, was inspired by the experiences of one of Representative Quinn's constituents, but there are thousands of people across Wisconsin who could find themselves in the same situation.

Collin has autism, though he shows no outward signs of the disability. However, when Collin was pulled over by a police officer, they had a hard time communicating – which led the officer to believe Collin had committed a violation.

In order to prevent situations like this from repeating themselves, SB 415 creates a voluntary way for people with invisible disabilities to alert law enforcement before a negative encounter can happen. By creating a DMV form that allows a person to reveal that they have a condition, officers can approach the situation with a more complete understanding.

Throughout the process of drafting this bill and its substitute amendment, we worked with members of the disability community and the Department of Transportation to ensure that we protect the privacy of the individual, provide this new tool for law enforcement, and keep costs low for the department.

To that end, no identifying mark would be placed on the disabled person's identification card. Information is available to the officer in a database. Passage of this legislation would result in the creation of a new form that people with invisible disabilities could fill out if they choose – only one line would have to be added to the current DMV paperwork directing individuals to the new form or to a location online. This bill would take effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 2019, in order to give DMV the time necessary to update their paperwork, and to reduce waste.

Thank you for your time, and please join me in supporting this bill.



# Romaine Quinn

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 75th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

January 30, 2018

Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans' Affairs

Chairman Petrowski and members of the committee:

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today about Collin's Law, SB 415. Over a year ago I had the pleasure of meeting an incredible young man — Collin Mitchell and his mother, Buffi.

Collin told me about a problem he'd had, and asked if I could help with a situation he experienced. You see, Collin has autism. Autism can be an invisible disability. You couldn't tell he has it just by looking at him, but it impacts his life just like any other disability would. So even though Collin doesn't appear to need help, he still needs some assistance from time to time.

One day soon after Collin had earned his driver's license, he was pulled over by a police officer. When approached by the officer, Collin and the officer had a hard time communicating, which led the officer to believe that Collin was not following the law. If the officer had known that Collin was struggling to communicate due to his disability, the interaction could have gone much better.

So Buffi, Collin's mother, asked me if I could help Collin and others with invisible disabilities to avoid this kind of situation in the future. She asked me if there was any way to create an ID that would assist police in understanding that they're dealing with someone with an invisible disability, and ease the communication between the police and the folks they're working with.

I've talked with many stakeholders, and learned some important things along the way. An invisible disabilities ID needs to be available to police, but not openly visible — people may not want a potential employer to see that they have an invisible disability when applying for a job, for example. Disability advocacy groups also helped us refine what kinds of questions would help ease communication most effectively. And most importantly, of course, we discussed the importance of having this ID be completely optional.

Collin's Law accomplishes all of these criteria. This bill will create a totally

optional tag in the DOT system. There will be no outwardly identifying marker on the driver's license, like the sticker for organ donors. Instead, when a police officer runs a license plate number or driver's license, a screen will pop up on the computer in the squad car, informing the officer of what kind of communications impairment is present, so that the officer knows how to better approach the disabled person. This way, police officers can know about a person's disability before they approach a driver, but can also have the flexibility of running a driver's license in an interaction that does not involve a car.

As I said, the registry is entirely voluntary. Collin's Law directs DOT to add one simple question to the driver's license form:

*"I have an invisible disability that I wish to disclose to law enforcement officers and that may include:*

*Appears deaf or unable to understand.*

*Has difficulty speaking or communicating.*

*Engages in repetitive or self-stimulating behaviors such as rocking or hand flapping.*

*Appears anxious, nervous, or upset.*

*Becomes agitated due to physical contact or stressful situations.*

*Acts indifferent or unresponsive.*

*Other (provide brief description)."*

In crafting this question, we looked to Florida, which was the first state in the nation to implement an invisible disabilities tag on the driver's license. The question covers the range of the most common types of issues people may face, and leaves room for individualized input.

By supporting Collin's Law, you will be taking a major step to address a problem that, like the disabilities we are addressing, is largely invisible to most in society. I would like to say that I am extremely proud, and thankful to Collin for his courage in addressing the question, and I hope you will join me in doing all we can to support Collin and the community of people like him.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.