

**STATE SENATOR
KEVIN BACON**
3rd Ohio Senate District



**STATE SENATOR
SHANNON JONES**
7th Ohio Senate District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BACON AND JONES INTRODUCE BILL TO ENSURE EQUAL PROTECTIONS
FOR AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS USING ASSISTANCE DOGS**

COLUMBUS— State Senators Kevin Bacon (R- Minerva Park) and Shannon Jones (R-Springboro) announced today they have introduced Senate Bill 149, legislation that will include autism in the laws governing assistance dogs in Ohio.

“This bill would simply add individuals with autism to the list of protected individuals using assistance dogs,” Bacon said.

Currently, the Ohio Revised Code is silent regarding any provision for individuals on the autism spectrum utilizing assistance dogs. Many young individuals with autism use specially-trained assistance dogs to help keep them calm and safe while at school or in other settings.

“Many autistic individuals, and their families and caretakers, have found that an assistance dog greatly improves their quality of life,” Jones said. “Donnie, a constituent of mine from Clearcreek Township, is one of these success stories, and I am pleased to be able to help change Ohio law to ensure his dog and others can accompany their owners as they go about their daily activities.”

This issue was brought to the attention of Senators Bacon and Jones by a mother with a son on the autism spectrum. The family has an assistance dog and was concerned that the assistance dog could possibly be disallowed from accompanying him to school. After understanding the success and usefulness of the dogs for autism, both legislators thought a statutory change was needed.

“Although each and every person on the autism spectrum does not use an assistance dog, there are Ohio families that rely on these dogs on a daily basis, and this bill will ensure that they can continue to utilize this great resource,” Bacon said.

Bacon and Jones each sponsored similar legislation regarding autism assistance dogs during the last General Assembly. Senate Bill 149 will now be assigned to a Senate Committee for further review.

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For more information, please contact Laurel Ullman in Senator Bacon’s office at (614) 466-8064 or Angela Pitstick in Senator Jones’ office at (614) 466-9737.