



# Support the Autism Commission

**SB1232 - Senator Aird (Chief Patron)**  
**HB1772 – Delegate Hope (Chief Patron)**

We urge legislators to recognize the critical need for policies, funding, and services that address the unique challenges associated with autism. **This Bill elevates the Autism Advisory Council to an Autism Commission with dedicated staff, a recommendation from both the Behavioral Health Commission and Autism Advisory Council.** It recognizes the need for a targeted approach to address the unique challenges faced by Virginia’s autism community. Elevating the Autism Advisory Council to become an Autism Commission with staff will target these gaps while complementing efforts for all developmental disabilities, ensuring no community is left behind.


### Why An Autism Commission?

- **Growing Autism Population:** Virginia’s autism rates are increasing rapidly, overwhelming current support systems.
- **Complex Needs:** Autism spans a wide spectrum, requiring tailored research, policies, and services.
- **Current Gaps:** Existing services don’t adequately support many individuals with autism and their families.

### Key Features:

- **Collaboration, Not Division:** Works within the broader developmental disabilities framework.
- **Transparency:** Public input and advisory groups involving self-advocates, families, and experts without overextending the existing Disability Commission.
- **Strategic Action:** Creates a plan for autism-related needs in Virginia, complementing developmental disability efforts.

### Benefits of a Commission:

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**Focused Resources:** Addresses autism-specific challenges without diverting resources from other disability groups.
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**Professional Staff:** Enables data-driven research, subcommittees, and legislative recommendations.
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**Community Input:** Allows for the formation of sub-committees and public comment periods to ensure diverse voices are heard.
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**Proven Models:** Replicating effective Autism Commissions in other states would ensure success and progress.

**Take Action:** Support SB1232 and HB1772 to establish an Autism Commission, addressing gaps in services and empowering individuals with autism.

**FLIP OVER** ➔

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## Why Do We Need a Commission?

Elevating the Autism Advisory Council to an Autism Commission is not about dividing the disability community in any way—it's about ensuring that the rapidly growing and complex needs of the autism population are effectively met. **An Autism Commission is not simply about being heard — it's about driving meaningful action** without drawing away resources available to those with other developmental disabilities.



### COUNCIL

- Legislators
- Self-advocates
- Family members
- Autism advocacy organizations
- Clinicians
- School representatives
- Institutes of higher education representatives
- **No Dedicated Staff!**



### COMMISSION

- **Dedicated Staff** to do research & analysis, gather input and stakeholder feedback, and drive meaningful action
- Legislators, a self-advocate, clinician, and advocacy organization representative
- **More Diverse Representation through Subcommittees, with several additional:**
  - Legislators
  - Self-advocates
  - Family members
  - Autism advocacy organizations
  - Clinicians
  - School representatives
  - Institutes of higher education representatives
  - And More!

**We urge you to support the Autism Commission to address gaps and build a comprehensive framework!**

Establishing a commission would provide additional infrastructure — including dedicated staff — to elevate the council into a position where they have the resources to gather community input and advocate for change. Supporting SB1232 and HB1772 means creating a commission with the staff, expertise, and capacity to act, ensuring a better future for all Virginians.