

## Committee on Criminal Justice

### HB 711 — Spectrum Alert

by Reps. Borrero, Campbell, and others (CS/CS/SB 500 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil Justice; and Senators Avila and Arrington)

The bill creates s. 937.0401, F.S., to establish and implement the “Spectrum Alert,” to create a standardized system to aid in the search for a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). By July 1, 2026, the Department of Law Enforcement, in cooperation with the Department of Transportation, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the Department of the Lottery and local law enforcement agencies must establish and implement the spectrum alert to enhance the safety and well-being of children with ASD through immediate effective community response.

The bill also requires those agencies, by July 1, 2026, to:

- Develop a training program and alert system for missing children with ASD which is compatible with existing alert systems. The training program must implement crisis intervention team training to equip law enforcement officers with the skills to understand ASD and other mental illnesses, to de-escalate interactions with children in crisis, to facilitate appropriate interventions, and to respond effectively to a reported missing child emergency when the child has ASD.
- Establish policies and procedures for responding to a reported missing child emergency when the child has ASD. The bill specifies the policies and procedures must include, at minimum, all of the following:
  - Immediate and widespread dissemination of critical information when a child with ASD is reported missing.
  - Enhancement of emergency response team’s competence by informing them of the unique behaviors and needs of children with ASD.
  - Measures to increase public awareness and understanding of the risks associated with autism-related elopement, to foster community support for children with ASD.
- Require a law enforcement agency, when receiving such a report, to do, at minimum, the following:
  - Contact media outlets in the affected area or surrounding jurisdictions.
  - Inform all on-duty law enforcement officers of the reported missing child with ASD.
  - Communicate the report to all other law enforcement agencies in the surrounding counties in which the report was filed.

The bill appropriates \$190,000 in nonrecurring funds from the Operating Trust Fund within the Department of Law Enforcement for the department to implement the Spectrum Alert.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

*Vote: Senate 37-0; House 99-0*