

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL 848

Short Title: Rio's Law.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senator Hise (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

April 28, 2026

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ENACT RIO'S LAW.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known as "Rio's Law."

SECTION 2. G.S. 17C-6 reads as rewritten:

"§ 17C-6. Powers of Commission.

(a) In addition to powers conferred upon the Commission elsewhere in this Article, the Commission shall have the following powers, which shall be enforceable through its rules and regulations, certification procedures, or the provisions of G.S. 17C-10:

...

(17) Establish minimum educational and training standards for employment and continuing education for criminal justice officers ~~concerning~~concerning all of the following:

a. Recognizing and appropriately interacting with (i) persons who are deaf or hard of ~~hearing~~hearing and (ii) persons with autism spectrum disorder.

...

c. Recognizing the autism spectrum disorder special registration plate issued pursuant to G.S. 20-79.4.

...."

SECTION 3. G.S. 17E-4 reads as rewritten:

"§ 17E-4. Powers and duties of the Commission.

(a) The Commission shall have the following powers, duties, and responsibilities, which are enforceable through its rules and regulations, certification procedures, or the provisions of G.S. 17E-8 and G.S. 17E-9:

...

(13) Establish minimum educational and training standards for employment and continuing education for officers ~~concerning~~concerning all of the following:

a. Recognizing and appropriately interacting with (i) persons who are deaf or hard of ~~hearing~~hearing and (ii) persons with autism spectrum disorder.

...

c. Recognizing the autism spectrum disorder special registration plate issued pursuant to G.S. 20-79.4.

...."

SECTION 4.(a) G.S. 20-79.4(b) reads as rewritten:



"(b) Types. – The Division shall issue the following types of special registration plates:

...

Q Autism Spectrum Disorder Designation. – Issuable to a person with autism spectrum disorder, as defined in G.S. 58-3-192. The plate shall bear the phrase "Autistic/Neurodivergent" and a "Just Bee" logo approved by Just Bee, Inc. For the purposes of this subdivision, a person shall be considered to have autism spectrum disorder if the person provides verification or documentation substantiating a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The Division shall identify acceptable forms of verification that do not result in undue burden to the person requesting the designation of autism spectrum disorder. Acceptable documentation shall include documentation of certification or examination by a medical, health, or mental health professional showing evidence of autism spectrum disorder.

...."

SECTION 4.(b) The Revisor of Statutes is authorized to alphabetize, number, and renumber the special registration plates listed in G.S. 20-79.4(b) to ensure that all of the special registration plates are listed in alphabetical order and numbered accordingly.

SECTION 5.(a) The Medical Care Commission (Commission) and the North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services (NCOEMS) shall adopt rules under G.S. 131E-159 to require all emergency medical services personnel, as defined in G.S. 131E-155, to receive certified autism and neurodiversity training to be credentialed under Article 7 of Chapter 131E of the General Statutes.

SECTION 5.(b) By October 1, 2027, the Commission and NCOEMS shall implement certified autism and neurodiversity training for all new credentialed emergency medical services personnel as a requirement for initial credentialing under NCAC Title 10A Subchapter 13P (NCAC). By October 1, 2028, completion of certified autism and neurodiversity training shall be required for credential renewal for emergency medical services personnel. The Commission and NCOEMS may contract with any association that meets the National Emergency Medical Services Education Standards, consistent with NCAC requirements.

SECTION 6. By October 1, 2027, the State Fire and Rescue Commission shall, pursuant to G.S. 58-78-5, incorporate certified autism and neurodiversity training into the State Fire Education and Training Plan, the State Master Plan for Fire Prevention and Control, a Rescue Training Plan, and the State Master Plan for Rescue Services.

SECTION 7. This act is effective when it becomes law.