

# **PROPOSAL: The Arizona Rare Disease & Medical Safety Act**

**Presented by:** Voices For The Rare

**Proposed by:** Holly Martinez (LD15 Constituent)

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## **I. Executive Summary**

Individuals within the rare disease and disability communities often face significant communication and physical barriers. For non-verbal or mobility-impaired individuals, standard interactions with law enforcement or emergency services can lead to life-threatening misunderstandings. This proposal seeks to create a "Zebra Safety" framework in Arizona to provide visual and digital identifiers for medically vulnerable citizens, ensuring that their physical and communication needs are met with safety and understanding.

## **II. Key Legislative Components**

### **1. Voluntary Driver License & Real ID Designations**

- **Medical Alert Symbol:** Establish a voluntary "Medical Alert" or "Communication Barrier" icon on the front of Arizona-issued IDs (similar to the Veteran or Native American designations). This notifies officials that the individual may be non-verbal or have specialized medical needs.
- **Physical Disability Icon:** Allow for a miniature "International Symbol of Access" (wheelchair icon) on the ID itself for those with permanent mobility issues, reducing the burden of carrying separate placards during routine interactions.

### **2. Rare Disease Awareness Specialty Plate**

- **Creation:** Establish a "Rare Disease Awareness" license plate featuring the Zebra ribbon.
- **Funding:** Per ARS § 28-2403, \$17 of the \$25 annual fee shall fund Arizona rare disease patient advocacy and specialized "Medical Barrier" training for first responders.

### **3. Law Enforcement Database Integration**

- **Database Flag:** Enable a voluntary "Medical Flag" in the ALEA database linked to a vehicle plate. This notifies officers *before* they approach a vehicle that the occupant may

be non-verbal or physically unable to comply with standard commands, reducing the risk of escalated force.

### **III. The "Why": A Constituent Case Study**

*"As a non-verbal, post-surgical patient in a wheelchair, I fear that my inability to respond quickly to an officer could be mistaken for non-compliance. Currently, I am fleeing an unsafe, alcoholic domestic environment while recovering from major jaw surgery. This bill is not just about awareness; it is about providing immediate clarity to peace officers to save lives and protect vulnerable adults like myself."* — **Holly Martinez, LD15**

### **IV. Justification**

This legislation follows the "Safety First" model already being adopted in other states. It ensures that Arizona's most vulnerable citizens—specifically those fleeing domestic instability or recovering from major medical procedures—are protected by clear, state-verified identification that can be understood in seconds during a crisis.