



**PENNSYLVANIA  
TOURETTE  
SYNDROME  
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

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**NECESSITY OF HOUSE BILL 2620**

**- REASONS FOR PASSAGE -**

**Philadelphia County:**

They called her the Duck Lady, the famous Duck Lady of Philadelphia. You see, she quacked - a lot. All day, in fact. Other things, too, that were odd. The police loved to hassle her. When stressed, she quacked more. She was fun! For the police, anyway. For most of them. I don't believe she thought her life fun. She was homeless, for who would associate with a woman who quacked. She spent her life hiding from the police and the world.

**Lancaster County:**

He was stopped for a speeding ticket. It happens to lots of us. We are people in a hurry. Everyone feels stressed when stopped by the police. No, he shouldn't have been speeding on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. But it was just a routine traffic stop - until the officer heard the language emitting from this young man. Coprolalia, it's called, that involuntary language of Tourette Syndrome. The trooper certainly could not tolerate that language being used before an officer of the law. To jail with you, young man. Following multiple explanations about a disorder called Tourette Syndrome, a physician was located that could authenticate that such a disorder did exist. Finally, after two hours of incarceration in the county lock-up, he was given his ticket and freed to continue on his way.

**Potter County:**

He was teased by teachers and students. He was 14 years old. He made faces, wiggled, and made funny guttural sounds. He hated school, was afraid to go there. His name was Aaron. He skipped school sometimes. Just too difficult to stand another day of it. He was truant. So the officers of Coudersport arrested him, took him to school and handcuffed him to the desk. Surely something was wrong in his home to have a child behave this way. His mother was questioned repeatedly, always denying wrongdoing with this boy. Finally, she closed her business and left town. Aaron quit school as soon as he could. Officers with knowledge about Tourette Syndrome could have changed a life and kept a child in school.

People with Tourette Syndrome are ordinary people, as good and as bad as the rest of us. Tourette Syndrome is NOT an excuse to break the law. But citizens with Tourette Syndrome are also entitled to equity under the law. For most of us, law enforcement begins with the officer or officers who interact with us. If they do not understand the disorder, have formed their opinion about Tourette Syndrome from a television show, or are not willing to believe this behavior is a disorder or, worse yet, a joke, the citizens with Tourette Syndrome do not have equity under the law.

**Fayette County:**

He was 12 years old. His tics caused him horrific embarrassment. Emotionally, it was not easy in school, living with his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and impulse control issues. Then the only girl who did speak to him dared him to partially lower his sweat pants on "dress down" day at school. (At least she was finally talking to him!) Unfortunately the principle caught him and called the police. Charges were filed. Advocacy by a Tourette Syndrome Association disability volunteer at the magistrate's office was successful. Charges were dropped.

House Bill 2620 can formulate and mandate necessary changes for victims of Tourette Syndrome. HB 2620 will have unique power to inaugurate and sustain ongoing disability training for both state and municipal police officers. It can incorporate in that training advances in knowledge of and treatment for the disability by direct contact with the agencies that secure and disseminate such data on a daily basis. I sincerely ask passage of this legislation on behalf of nearly 3,000 Pennsylvanians with Tourette Syndrome.

Thank you for your attention.

Mary Lou Reaver, R.N.  
Executive Director