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Sen. Schumer Introduces 'Avonte's Law' To Address Wandering

WASHINGTON, DC (June 17, 2014) -- Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) has introduced "Avonte's Law," a bill that would provide \$10 million a year in federal funding to local law enforcement agencies to acquire tracking devices to protect children with disabilities who wander and to train police on how to interact with people with disabilities.



The measure, [S.2386](#), is named in honor of Avonte Oquendo, a 14-year-old New York City child with autism who wandered out of his school earlier this year and was later found dead in a nearby river.

"The tragic end to the search for Avonte Oquendo clearly demonstrates that we need to do more to protect children with autism who are at risk of running away," said Schumer, when he first announced the legislation in January.

"Thousands of families face the awful reality each and every day that their child with autism may run away," he said. "Making voluntary tracking devices available will help put parents at ease, and most importantly, help prevent future tragedies like Avonte's."

The bill would allow local law enforcement agencies to apply for federal grants to fund tracking devices, as well as training programs for first responders, school staff, clinicians and the public to help prevent wandering by children with autism or other disabilities up to the age of 18. In addition, grants would be available to train local enforcement how to "recognize and respond to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities."

The specific tracking resources could include tracking technology, reverse 911 technology, assistive communication technology or the use of Endangered Missing Advisories. Funding also could be available to train local police in federal search-and-rescue guide-lines for special needs children.

The program would be administered by the Attorney General's office which would be required to issue standards safeguarding the privacy of data generated by tracking devices, as well as criteria establishing that the use of tracking devices offered the "least restrictive alternative" for preventing injury or death.