

From: [Christine De Nicola](#)
To: [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\); supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org](#)
Cc: [Moser, Natalie](#)
Subject: Certified Autism Destination Initiative - November 21 Meeting
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 1:51:17 PM
Attachments: [CAD Initiative-112123.pdf](#)

Attached is our letter in support of Council Member Natalie Moser's initiative in becoming a Certified Autism Destination for the November 21, 2023 council meeting.

Thank you,
Christine and Tom De Nicola
21291 Pinetree Ln, Huntington Beach, CA 92646
949-689-2123
714-225-3139

**SUPPLEMENTAL
COMMUNICATION**

Meeting Date: 11/21/2023

Agenda Item No.: 20 (23-1021)

November 20, 2023

Dear Council Member Moser:

We are writing to you in hopes that Huntington Beach will join communities like Palm Springs and Visalia, California in exploring the feasibility of becoming a Certified Autism Destination.

Currently 1 in 36 children are diagnosed with autism in the US. 1 in 6 people have a sensory need or sensitivity. Many adults are autistic but were never formally diagnosed. So, the likelihood you will encounter a neurodivergent individual is high. Such a statistic represents an underserved population and a new community base that is deeply appreciated when recognized and understood.

Our 9-year-old son Jack was diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) at 2 years and 10 months. Autism is an invisible disability; this can make it difficult for others to understand why and how a person may behave or react in a certain way. As many autism parents know, it's not easy to escape judgment and find a place that welcomes neurodiversity. We have experienced establishments that are truly committed to meeting the needs of neurodiverse guests and it has made us deeply loyal to any business that makes autism awareness part of its mission.

Our city can be a powerful voice in embracing neurodiversity. When an individual feels welcome, they are more likely to volunteer for activities, socialize and engage in their community. Having a sense of community keeps individuals on the autism spectrum from feeling alone. Neurodivergent people bring many strengths to our community. These include strengths in creative, innovative, and analytical thinking and expertise in areas of special interest.

By exploring the feasibility of becoming a Certified Autism Destination, Huntington Beach will join Mesa, Arizona in recognizing neurodivergent individuals as valued members of our community. I look forward to the City Manager and staff's thorough review of this item and hope that it will be introduced to the city council by the second quarter of 2024.

Thank you for introducing this initiative.

Sincerely,

Christine and Tom De Nicola
21291 Pinetree Lane
Huntington Beach, CA 92646
949-689-2123
714-225-3139

From: [K Carroll](#)
To: [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\)](#); supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: City Council Meeting Agenda November 21, 2023: Items 23-995, 23-1020 & 23-1021
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 1:06:13 PM

Greetings Mayor Strickland, Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark and Councilmen Pat Burns and Casey McKeon:

Thank you again for all that you have accomplished through lightning speed during this first year reign. The citizens have reaped huge benefits from your actions and continuous momentum to stay true to the culture of HB and its roots and improve the quality of life for both long term residents, incoming residents and visitors. Promises made, promises kept.

I would like to share my opinions on three 11/21/23 Agenda Items:

Item 23-995: Sober Living. Please deny appeal. These sober living houses are a scam and help little. They use up insurance and kick the addicted out into the homeless population that has caused for years an uptick in crime and financial burden on HB, not to mention reduced home values in residential areas where they reside and well as cause a nuisance to surrounding neighbors.

Item 23-1020: Veterans: Don't waste the staff's time. Frankly, I am somewhat amazed that Moser would bring this up now as we have had in place a homeless plan in effect for years. Moser often applauded the progress. Moser knows that Veterans are part of the homeless population and has done nothing to maintain accountability that was already put in effect during her term. Moser is politicizing NOW using Veterans as pawns the same as she did for the flag issue and Interfaith Council. Divisive. Of course, Veterans should not be homeless! The only homeless she continued to highlight during her term were kids and children. BTW, I have seen none of those. Only addicts, mentally ill and a few who did not appear to have any symptoms; but, appeared to be homeless. In my opinion, someone needs to be assigned to cover all the accountability metrics with a quarterly report or even monthly.

Item 23-1021: Autism: Similar to my reasons above. Why is Moser using this one disability as a political pawn. There are so many other disabilities. HB welcomes all people with disabilities and no disabilities. Divisive. Moser is politicizing a disability. How does one disability deserve more recognition than the others? The City Council should not be involved in making this determination which disabilities are recognized or highlighted. That is disrespectful to other disabilities.

Wishing you all a Thanksgiving filled with blessings, laughter and yummy goodness.

Best regards,

Kris Carroll

From: [Ann Palmer](#)
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: Oppose Agenda Item #20/23-1020 Autism Destination Concerns
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 5:19:29 PM
Attachments: [Autism Destination Certification concerns HB small.pdf](#)

Good evening.

I read Agenda Item #20 and attachments and, while support for individuals experiencing ASD is generally a good thing, there are some concerns. I have outlined most of those in the attached document that shows even implementing a review and study of Destination certification is likely a drain in the city budget and not sustainable in the long term.

My family members and several colleagues have experience with the certification process for a particular Midwestern city. I would be happy to discuss but will not publish names.

Thank you,
Ann Palmer
30+ year resident
HB 92648

Sent from my iPhone

Autism Destination Considerations for Huntington Beach

Re: Agenda Item #20 23-1021: Exploring the Feasibility of Becoming a Certified Autism Destination in Huntington Beach

Accommodating those of all ages on the Autism Spectrum (persons with ASD or Autism Spectrum Disorder) may be commendable and desirable; however, there are serious concerns that should be considered before communities or destinations undertake even the study and assessment phase of becoming a designated Autism Destination or Autism Certified City.

There are hundreds of chronic diseases and conditions that affect children and adults in the US and across the globe and there are thousands of advocacy groups and organizations. ASD is one of the most common diseases and as the name implies has a wide range and level of disability – or lack thereof – for those affected. As a result, ASD has hundreds of topically related organizations, some charitable or non-profit but others that are decidedly for profit. Obviously, all need funds to operate.

There is a great deal of competition and marketing in the ASD support community/industry to secure funding or monetize programs. The alignment between charitable organizations involved in research or awareness and those involved with lobbying or promoting the profitable organizations is not always revealed and has cost some communities untenable commitments, resources and budget allocations. Before discussing the situation that occurred in Madison, Wisconsin, we should be familiar with a sampling of some organizations, processes and executional endeavors may be involved.

1. Embark on Study and/or “conduct a through review of the feasibility and requirements for Huntington Beach to become a Certified Autism Destination”

- Any Study or Review requested of City Manager and staff requires hours and resources at a time when the community has been advised that the city is understaffed and those staff employed are critically overworked or at capacity for non-essential or non-urgent matters beyond regular assignments.
- REVIEW suggests – and is supported by materials provided in attachments – that the feasibility, SWOT and Lucid chart analysis are already prepared by an outside organization(likely IBCCES) and need only be learned.
- Engaging with Experts implies that there will be need of SMEs (subject matter experts) and Consultants required. Most are not unbiased and all are at a cost.
- Meeting with Stakeholders typically does not include most small businesses which are unable to meet requirements or cannot afford ONGOING employee time and training costs or certification/placard fees.
- **“Develop a plan to outline steps, resources, costs. . .”** would mean a large undertaking by staff and seems presumptuous.

Autism Destination Considerations for Huntington Beach (cont'd)

Re: Agenda Item #20 23-1021: Exploring the Feasibility of Becoming a Certified Autism Destination in Huntington Beach

2. Designations of “Autism Destination City” and “Autism Destination” require investment and are granted by organizations that are largely For Profit

- **Pay to Play?** A few organizations have formed that purport to meet the needs of ASD persons especially for travel and entertainment. This is an aspiration with value but the process and commitment can be unwieldy.
- The primary player in this arena is IBCCES, The International Board of Certification and Continuing Education. The organization produces or promotes course curriculum to support CEUs (Continuing Education Units), certification processes and various related for-fee programs.
- IBCCES will lobby communities and provide extensive research and promotional presentation materials that are very persuasive. After all, being ASD-friendly is arguably thoughtful and attractive to those with ASD family members who have reactive symptoms.
- Training is specially tailored for unique groups such as
- **“Develop a plan to outline steps, resources, costs. . .”** would mean a large undertaking by staff and seems presumptuous. Safety & Law Enforcement, Public Entities, Corporations, and Entertainment & Attractions. Not surprisingly, the highest participation is with public/tax-supported groups, non-profit attractions (museums, institutions) and corporate-backed entertainment (theme parks, hotels, etc.) where there are incentives and government credits available for employee training and certification.
- There is a **threshold** for administrative and employee training for each entity as well as a number or percentage of businesses in a municipality that attain certification for that location to be certified.
- For **onboarding** the city and participating entities must be assessed and (for locations) inspected – at a cost.
- **Training and certification** (at a cost) is monitored and assessment/inspection is ongoing. At a cost. Considering employee turnover, facility changes and economic fluctuation this can easily become a burden especially to smaller businesses.
- Designated ASD Travel Agents (IBCCES Certified) and networks are recommended if not required to book travel for ASD-family tourists. This is a separate Certification Program focused on the Travel Industry paid for by the agents or their companies. This may place unfair competition or undue burden on some independent, local agents.
- Listings of designated cities and attractions may not be automatic or free.
- Even with IBCCES certification there is some confusion about the meaning. For instance, Mesa, Arizona was The First-Ever Autism Certified City in the World. Or in the U.S.? But. . . “Visalia, California, Becomes First Certified Autism Destination” and “Sesame Place was the first location to be Certified.”

Autism Destination Considerations for Huntington Beach (cont'd)

Re: Agenda Item #20 23-1021: Exploring the Feasibility of Becoming a Certified Autism Destination in Huntington Beach

2. Alternatives to embarking on a full study for “Autism Destination City”

- Understanding the needs of those with ASD challenges is advantageous for all public-facing businesses and services. There are many excellent resources locally and through non-profit organizations, a few of which are referenced here.
- Golden West and Orange Coast Community Colleges have courses to familiarize family and community members about ASD including behavioral and environmental implications. This would be an excellent starting point for specific learning before launching a full staff study.
- **Autism Network International:** this organization was formed and is run by verbal ASD individuals. They have resources available at no charge and fee-based training.
- **The Center for Autism and Neurological Disorders:** Based in Costa Mesa, this organization provides extensive training and can tailor sessions for large groups.
- **The Star Institute:** while their education programs were developed for professionals they are able to tailor sessions focusing on sensory development triggers and behaviors for community sessions.
- **AutismUp:** this organization is somewhat more commercial but has affordable education and certification options.
- **CAN: Champion Autism Network** is another experiential and certification operation but seems more community oriented and grassroots.
- **APA: The American Psychological Association** was recommended for consultation in the Huntington Beach City council meeting Agenda Item #20. 23-1021 description/detail. This is a professional, for-profit, membership association. So is their **Division 33** which specializes in ASD. It is likely that they would advocate for those organizations that have high membership, ongoing contracts or advertising programs with the association.
- **Timing:** It seems clear that with the funds lacking for needed infrastructure improvements and the looming unfunded liabilities that this is not an opportune time to plan or undertake an extensive review or study, much less embark on a complex city certification effort. An ad hoc committee of interested parties could absorb the materials available and if deemed helpful, recommend a far simpler, more local source of education.
- **The IBCCES certification program** includes elements that are similar to “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” and “Automobile of the Year,” meaning simply that a large and/or ongoing investment is required to stay in good graces.
- Anecdotal information: I am aware of a community in the MidWest that worked on programs and certifications for a decade. The contributing parties included a University, Local Businesses, Amusement Park and the State Government. After four years they realized that there were major unintended consequences for the community. About 30% of their entities are certified but are “falling out” faster than others are gaining certification.

From: [Jeanne Paris](#)
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: No on Agenda item 20
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 6:07:43 PM

To the City Council:

Although this appears to be a commendable goal there may be unintended consequences - such as hurting small businesses that may not be able to keep with required certifications. To name a few. There are more pressing issues in Surf City at this time.

Jeanne Paris

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Carol Daus](#)
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: In favor of #19 and #20
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 8:03:42 PM

Dear Council Members,

I am in favor of Council Member Moser's proposals #19 and #20.

Veterans are at greater risk of homelessness than non-veterans and in California where housing costs are exorbitant, it's especially problematic. I have discussed this with volunteers at Huntington Beach Public Library's Veterans Resource Center, and everyone there agrees that greater local resources are needed for this population. Council Member Moser's proposal is an important step in addressing this serious problem.

I am also in favor of her proposal to review the feasibility of making Huntington Beach a Certified Autism Destination. I know parents with children with autism who don't travel at all because they feel their children are unwelcome in hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Most hospitality staff are unfamiliar with the needs of these individuals, and can even make inappropriate remarks when a child appears to be acting up. An educational program addressing the needs of neurodiverse children and their families while on vacation would be helpful for Huntington Beach's hospitality industry. Mesa, Arizona, was the first city in the U.S. to receive this designation and it seems to be working. It would be beneficial to network with these cities to find out how they implemented their programs.

Thanks,

Carol Daus
Huntington Beach resident, 28 years

From: [Kathleen De Nicola](#)
To: [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\); supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org](#)
Subject: Agenda Item #20
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 9:45:20 PM
Attachments: [CAD initiative.docx](#)

Hello!

You can find my letter in support for Agenda Item #20 attached. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Kat De Nicola

UCLA 2021
B.A. Dance
Applied Developmental Psychology Minor, Disability Studies Minor
(She/her/hers)

November 20th, 2023

Dear Council Member Moser,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am reaching out with a heartfelt request for Huntington Beach to consider becoming a Certified Autism Destination.

I am recent graduate from the University of California, Los Angeles, where I earned a degree in Dance with a double minor in Applied Developmental Psychology and Disability Studies. My academic journey was deeply rooted in the pursuit of accessibility. One of my proudest achievements was my capstone research project, titled "Dancing Beyond the Eye," which explored innovative ways to make dance accessible to the visually impaired community. My project was honored to receive The Jessie Alpaugh Senior Prize in Disability Studies that year.

Throughout my academic pursuits, I came to appreciate the profound impact of accessibility. An inclusive environment not only allows individuals with disabilities to engage with spaces but also validates and empowers their experiences as a disabled person. I often reflect on the analogy of a wheelchair ramp: initially designed for wheelchair accessibility but later found to be valuable for parents with strollers or mail carriers with heavy packages. This shows that small changes in accessibility can lead to significant, positive impacts for everyone.

My passion for enhancing accessibility in our community is deeply personal, rooted in my love for my hometown of Huntington Beach, California, and fueled by my younger brother, who is on the Autism Spectrum. At nine years old, he adores music, dance, and taekwondo. Imagining our city as a Certified Autism Destination brings me comfort knowing he will grow up in a welcoming environment. For instance, I can envision playgrounds with areas specifically designed for sound control, allowing my brother a space to retreat when overstimulated. By doing this, the city acknowledges, accepts, and celebrates my brother's differences.

I am eager for the City Manager and staff to thoroughly review this proposal, with the hope that it will be introduced to the city council by the second quarter of 2024.

Thank you for championing this initiative and considering the positive impact it can have on our community.

Warm regards,

Kathleen De Nicola

From: [Celeste Rybicki](#)
To: [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\); supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org](#)
Subject: In support of Item 20 and the item addressing veteran homelessness
Date: Monday, November 20, 2023 9:57:18 PM

Dear HB city council members,

I'm writing to show support and implore you to vote yes on the items Councilmember Natalie Moser is bringing forth to explore becoming a Certified Autism Destination and to explore options to address specifically unhoused veterans in Huntington Beach. Both issues put us on a path of really prioritizing the inclusivity and caring nature we want to be known for. I think it would be so good for our city and such a positive action by the council.

Thank you,
Celeste
HB resident

From: [Amanda Crater](#)
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org; citycouncil@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: Agenda Item 20: Exploring the Feasibility of Becoming a Certified Autism Destination in Huntington Beach.
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 7:29:08 AM

Hi,

I am an HB resident and am writing to express my support for HB becoming a Certified Autism Destination. My 6 year-old-son is on the spectrum and I absolutely love this idea! We already have so many great autism resources here and this would take it to the next level. Please support this measure!

Thank you!
Amanda Olson
9311 Woodcrest Dr
HB CA 92646

From: [Dennis Pappas](#)
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: Vote no on agenda item 20 November 2023
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 8:04:00 AM

HBCC, please vote no on agenda item 20.

Thank you,

Patricia Pappas

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Andrew McEachin](#)
To: [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\)](#); supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: Exploring the feasibility of becoming a certified Autism destination in Huntington Beach
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 8:28:01 AM

Huntington Beach City Council,

I'm writing in support of Councilperson Moser's Item Report to explore the feasibility of becoming a certified Autism destination in Huntington Beach. I think this is a great opportunity to expand our resources and knowledges of neurodiversity in our city. Autism is one of the more common neurodivergencies affecting individuals of all ages and in many social and professional settings. Creating an intentional and systemic action plan for the city will create beautiful opportunities for everyone who lives in or visits our city.

--

Cheers,
Andrew McEachin

From: cherivatkinson@aol.com
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org; [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\)](#); [Cheri Atkinson](#)
Subject: Yes on Item 19 and 20 on HB City Council Agenda
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 8:30:21 AM

I am writing in favor, and a yes vote on Items 19 and 20

Cheri Atkinson LCSW
HB Resident

From: [Debbi Parrott](#)
To: [CITY COUNCIL \(INCL. CMO STAFF\); supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org](#)
Subject: Agenda item 19 and 20
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 8:49:26 AM

Please address homelessness in our veteran community and make HB an certified autism destination. Support item 19 and 20. Thanks, Debbi Parrott--

With gratitude,
Debbi Parrott

From: [Wendy Rincon](#)
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org
Subject: Agenda Item 20
Date: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 8:59:19 AM

Dear HB City Council,

I am writing in support of tonight's Agenda item 20. I think that it is important to be an inclusive place going forward for our residents and visitors. We need a more positive city image after the latest decisions made by the council (rewriting the Human Relations statement, public libraries to start with). When people feel included and have a positive feeling about a city, they are more willing to visit and support the city financially.

I think that we can all get behind supporting Agenda item 20 as it is a non-partisan issue and supports the well being of people.

Sincerely,

Wendy Rincon