AMERIS BANK

NEWS RELEASE

Celebrating World Autism Awareness Month

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SPOTLIGHT ON AMERIS TEAMMATE AND ADVOCATE, TIFFANY PEARCE

Ameris Bank celebrates World Autism Awareness Month by sharing the story of our teammate Tiffany Pearce, SVP, Administration for our US Premium Finance division. In 2021, Tiffany shared more about her family and her son, Aidan with the Georgia House of Representatives. Tiffany's experience advocating for her son resulted in change that continues to positively impact families across the state.

"The opportunity to speak in front of the Georgia Senate and House was a great experience. I felt honored to be asked and to share my story," Tiffany said.

Tiffany's testimony supported a bill that created the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program, which allows eligible students to transfer to other public schools, public school systems or authorized participating private schools. The program has a requirement that students must be in a public school the year prior to transferring.

"In our case, my son had been in a special needs program in a public school since he was three; however, additional diagnoses required him to be in the hospital for about a year. Being away from the public school during this time made him ineligible for a transfer to a school that better fit his needs."

Following her testimony, a close vote changed the requirements of this program, preventing students like Aidan from being turned away from the program.

"At the time the bill was passed, I felt proud – and I still do. I was later told by a Senator that I made the difference in the vote that day. I was humbled in that moment, but beyond that, I felt so much pride for my son. If we had not endured this challenge, we wouldn't have had the opportunity to share Aidan's story. When I shared this with Aidan, he replied, 'Mom, so we helped other kids like me?' Aidan doesn't always feel proud of himself, but he did on that

day.”

As Tiffany reflects on her son’s accomplishments and her advocacy journey, to her, the recognition of World Autism Awareness Month simply means: We can talk about autism.

“When we talk about autism, we also need to talk about the other neurological diagnoses that come with it. We need to bring awareness to the lack of support and understanding for families that are touched by autism or who have other special needs and abilities. The more people understand what families go through, the more it will open opportunities to help families, kids and adults who have special abilities. I don’t want anyone to look at my child differently because of a diagnosis. He is the strongest, most-caring person I know. I want him to have every opportunity in life, and above all, I want him to be happy. Talking about autism will bring a better understanding to everyone, which I hope will allow Aidan (and all kids) to feel unique and worthy.”

Ameris Bank thanks Tiffany for sharing her story and for helping us foster greater inclusivity.