

### Testimony of David Daniel Klipper

Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. My wife Barbara and I have lived in Connecticut since 1985. Our home is here. I started a business here and ran it for fifteen years until I retired and became a chaplain. My wife is a librarian at our local public library. We love Connecticut and would like to stay here, but as you will see, that may not be possible for us.

We have two sons on the autism spectrum. Our older son is doing pretty well; he has made it through college and is in graduate school. He may at some point need help with job coaching, but so far he is managing to live reasonably independently.

Our younger son, Matthew, is a different story. Matthew is now 20 years old. He has been educated out-of-district his entire life because of his disability, and is currently in a residential school in Pennsylvania because of the lack of appropriate facilities in Connecticut. However, like all persons with autism, his disability takes on a unique form. Matthew is quite intelligent, with an IQ of above 100. However, he has the emotional maturity and social skills of a seven-year-old child, including the lack of impulse control typical of children that age. He spends much of his time in a fantasy world of his own, from which it is possible to extricate him only temporarily and with difficulty.

Last summer, our school district attempted to transition Matthew to a community-based adult program located in Westbrook, CT. He was accepted into this program after an extensive five-day evaluation. Unfortunately, he did not succeed there. He had several incidents of temper tantrums and acting out in the community, which led to the police being called and to him being placed in a psychiatric hospital to adjust his medication in an attempt, ultimately fruitless, to control these behaviors. He has since returned to the PA school. However, while he still has another year under the auspices of the Stamford public school system, he will nonetheless age out of his current school this June.

This brings us to our current dilemma. We are having tremendous difficulty finding a school for him for his last year, and we are currently looking in five different states. However, there are far more schools than there are adult programs for him after his finishes being in school in June 2008.

It is clear to everyone involved with our son that Matt is not able to live on his own and that he needs 24/7 structure to function. It is a terrible thing to wish that your son had mentally retardation or schizophrenia so that he would be able to obtain the services he desperately needs. Our current plan, absent being able to attract a funding source within Connecticut, is to try to find him a school program in a state with reasonable services for people with developmental disabilities like his, and then move to that state and hope that we can receive services.

I think this would be a shame, for many reasons. Both my wife and I work in and pay taxes to Connecticut. While I don't pay the level of taxes that I used to when I ran my own business, I now work as a hospice chaplain and bring, I hope, significant comfort and spiritual support to a segment of Connecticut's population that is in great need. My wife works with the special education and special needs community through her library. But most of all, this is our home. I don't understand why it is that someone who is unable to function in our society because of mental retardation is eligible to receive services, while someone else, equally unable to function, is not eligible to receive services because his disability is on the autism spectrum.

I urge you to approve a Medicaid waiver for Connecticut so that individuals on the autism spectrum who do not have mental retardation can obtain the services that they so desperately need. Thank you.