

**State of Connecticut House of Representatives
Human Services Committee
Tuesday, March 13, 2007**

RE: House Bill 7280: to use Medicaid Waiver Services funds to provide services for adults on the autistic spectrum

My name is Ellen Durnin, and I am the parent of a 28-year old son who is on the autistic spectrum. Due to Jeff's diagnosis, he has not been eligible for essential services that allow for independent daily living. We, his parents, are paying for these important services now, but are very concerned about what will happen to Jeff when we are gone. He has many of the same needs that adults with mental retardation do, but has been excluded from receiving what he needs to function as a participating member of the community.

Jeff is a responsible young man who just received his pin for four years of excellent service as an employee of Shaw's supermarkets. His identity as a working member of the community is the item that he is most proud of, and he begins conversations with new people by saying, "Hi, I'm Jeff and I work at Shaw's. Where do you work?"

However, Jeff does not drive and requires transportation to get to work. Additionally, he cannot grocery shop without assistance, nor do banking or pay bills. But with several hours of assistance each week, he is able to live semi-independently with a roommate, and accomplish all of the above.

It is critical that young adults like Jeff receive the vocational and independent living skills they need in order to develop into contributing members of the Connecticut economy. I

believe that Connecticut is now one of only three states out of fifty that does NOT provide such assistance to adults on the autistic spectrum. I am ashamed to live in the wealthiest state in the nation, and to have such a vulnerable sector of our population treated so cruelly.

But the provision of Medicaid waiver services funds to provide services for autistic adults without mental retardation is not just the compassionate thing to do; it is an investment in our state's economy. With some assistance, this population can work, pay for goods and services, and pay taxes. Without such support, they will likely wind up on public assistance, costing the state much more.

I urge you to support the passage of HB 7280. It is the fiscally responsible and the right thing to do for the state of Connecticut and its residents.

Ellen Durnin

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March 11, 2007