

**Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 7280
An Act Concerning Autism**

Good morning members of the Human Services Committee. My name is George Becker, I live in Guilford Connecticut with my wife Karen and my two sons Joseph who is 13 and August who is 11, both of whom are autistic, but are not mentally retarded.

This Bill, Number 7280, for Medicaid funding of home and community-based individualized support services for adults on the autism spectrum, but who are not mentally retarded; is probably the most important act affecting my family that the great State of Connecticut could ever take. It is the hopes and dreams of my wife Karen and me, to have both of our sons become self-supporting and contributing members of our local community; and for our sons to become self-supporting productive citizens of the State of Connecticut. The adults and children who will benefit from these services may not be able to advocate for themselves, but they are hard workers and dedicated individuals. This legislation will allow them to focus on building their strengths and their abilities, and to overcome their disability.

Our sons, and the children of Connecticut, who will become adults on the autism spectrum, are members of a group of people who have many talents, dreams and skills. These talents, dreams and skills are basically locked away because of their disability. These very special people have a huge potential to help this State and their local communities grow and prosper. The education system in general, does a wonderful job with initially preparing our children, by teaching them quote, the "basic skills" they need.

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But, as Albert Einstein said, "Education begins when you have forgotten everything you learned in school." By continuing with individualized home and community-based services for our fellow citizens after they have left school, we will be enabling the development of self-supporting, productive individuals, that because of their unique talents, skills and abilities will help our State and local communities grow.

I once heard our esteemed Senior Senator, Mr. Christopher Dodd say in one of his speeches, "Every American deserves to live in freedom, to have his or her privacy respected and to have a chance to go as far as their abilities and effort will take them."

We have the opportunity to make this ideal a reality for our adults on the autism spectrum. All we have to do is act.

Thank you for your time today.