

Re: HB 7280

**Testimony of: Maggie Casciato 60 Lealand Street, Bridgeport, CT 06606 (203) 374-5111**

March 13, 2007

My name is Maggie Casciato. My husband and I live in Bridgeport with our two sons, the older of whom, Tom, is 27 years old and has Asperger's Syndrome, a form of high-functioning autism. Tom is very bright but has serious social skills deficits. For several years my employer gave Tom a job in our mail room but when we had to downsize in 2004 Tom was laid off. He has not worked since – almost 3 years. Our family is not unique in this situation – you will discover that there are hundreds if not thousands of Connecticut families with adult children living at home and dependent on them, not because they don't have the mental capacity to hold a job, but because they don't have the professional support they need to work and live independently.

You have most certainly heard many times that Connecticut is one of only two states in the country that denies social services to adults on the autism spectrum unless they are retarded – we share that honor with Alabama. But recently we have taken an important step to change the situation. Due to the long, hard work of Lois Rosenwald and her colleagues, the enlightened support of many of our state legislators, and the cooperation of the DMR, we are now in the first year of a two year Autism Pilot Program. It serves no more than 50 people, in a geographically-limited area. But when the Pilot is finished we will have extremely useful data telling us exactly what services our adults need, how often they need them, how much they will cost, and how they will benefit from them.

The Pilot will serve as a template for expanding the services to others in the state. However, there is currently funding available only for the two years of the Pilot. We need to apply for a Medicaid waiver to continue and increase the funding so that the others can be served. Not doing so is foolish, cruel, and short-sighted. Besides the fact that it is the fair and right thing to do, it is even financially beneficial to provide support and appropriate services to our adults on the spectrum now, instead of being forced to do so later. Without help, many of these adults will end up in the social service system – whether it be collecting SSI, or welfare, or even being confined to a mental hospital or prison. It is incumbent on us to do the right thing now, to avoid more expense and less effective services later. Thank you for hearing us.