



For every child, a place to play:  
Every child! Every ability! Everywhere!

## **AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR BOUNDLESS PLAYGROUNDS IN NORTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT**

**Proposed Bill No. 566 (LCO No. 1608)**

January 30, 2007  
Committee on Human Services

Lisa Bigman  
Senior Director of Strategic Alliances  
Boundless Playgrounds®, Inc.

45 Wintonbury Avenue ☆ Bloomfield, CT 06002  
860-243-8315 ☆ fax: 860-243-5854 ☆ [www.boundlessplaygrounds.org](http://www.boundlessplaygrounds.org)

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Thank you for this proposed bill. Boundless Playgrounds is enthusiastically in support of Proposed Bill # 566, An Act Authorizing Bonds Of The State for Boundless Playgrounds in North Central Connecticut

#### **Why Is This Bill So Important?**

- Because playing matters
- Because through play children learn to navigate the world
- Because on a Boundless™ playground environment, the design configuration supports the way children learn
- Because conventional playgrounds rarely meet the needs of those with physical, sensory or developmental disabilities
- Because these playgrounds build upon the principles of the ADA in support of access for all in public spaces
- Because the national epidemic of childhood obesity makes it imperative for children to participate in regular recreation as the means to a healthy lifestyle
- Because children with and without disabilities enjoy opportunities for independence and personal growth on these barrier-free, developmentally appropriate environments as they play, learn and grow together

#### **Who is Boundless Playgrounds®?**

We are a national non-profit helping communities across the United States to create play environments that address the needs of children of all abilities. Established in 1997, we have celebrated the opening of more than 100 Boundless™ playgrounds in 20 states and one Canadian province. Our 100<sup>th</sup> playground is at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky. That playground was designed not only for the children on the post but also for the returning soldiers with disabilities so they could play with their children. Dozens more are in development.

In Connecticut, thanks to catalyst funding legislation in the 2001 and 2002 sessions, 30 communities have created or are in the process of developing a Boundless™ playground. We have administered this funding, working with and reporting to the Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Environmental Protection.

In the June 2005 Special Session, the bond act included funds not to exceed \$1,000,000 in both the Fiscal years '06 and '07 for grants-in-aid to Boundless Playgrounds, Inc. to help more Connecticut communities and more children (SA 05-1, Section 32, (d) (3) and SA 05-1, Section 32, (d) (4)). However, funds in this 2005 Act have not been allocated pursuant to this legislation.

Because the legislation in 2001 and 2002 was fully funded, and absent of any indication from the State that the bond funds under 2005 legislation would not be forthcoming, Boundless Playgrounds has been working with nine (9) projects, including one in north central Connecticut based upon site availability and readiness while waiting for Bond Commission approval. We have other inquiries from north central Connecticut from communities with a commitment to build a Boundless™ playground where children of all abilities can play together and we urge these bond funds to be appropriated.

Boundless Playgrounds started 10 years ago building one playground at a time, serving as the project manager on custom projects that could take anywhere from three to five years to be completed. Meanwhile, thousands of traditional playgrounds were still being built that made it difficult or impossible for children with disabilities to play with their typically able peers and siblings.

Since 2006, Boundless Playgrounds' business model has responded to the lack of accessibility on traditional playgrounds by making it easier and quicker for more Boundless™ playgrounds to be built. Seven national playground manufacturers, representing 65% of the playground manufacturer market, are participating in our Industry Partner program. Because we work directly with the manufacturer to provide Boundless Playgrounds Certified Models directly to the community, the cost is lower for equipment and design rather than our original program process.

We continue to build strategic alliances through partnerships with the United States Department of Health and Human Services "I Can Do It, You Can Do It" project and the national Inclusion Fitness Coalition. We are also in collaboration with partners like the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the CVS/pharmacy Charitable Trust "All Kids Can" program and PLAYSKOOL's "Let's ALL play ...it matters" programs that build upon the importance of play and inclusive play environments for children, as well as adults, of all abilities.

### **What are the unique benefits of a Boundless™ playground?**

- Architectural barriers are removed
- The equipment is configured to respect how children learn at different ages
- For children with mobility impairments, the play environment is designed for them to participate with the other children without having to leave support equipment behind
- For children with visual impairments, sensory activities are included in the equipment layout
- For children with autism, small quiet play areas are available where they can take a break from large group activities when they need to
- For children with Down syndrome, balancing activities that are particularly beneficial are included
- There's rigor and challenge for each child to play at his or her maximum potential

### **Why does it make sense for the State to enact this legislation?**

- The State investment is leveraged many-fold. A CT challenge grant initiative enacted in 2001 resulted in 15 Boundless™ Playgrounds statewide. For every State dollar, between 3 and 4 dollars more of non-state money was raised for these playgrounds.
- The playground cost is a non-recurring expense. Once constructed, the playground will last 15-20 years with normal maintenance.
- Community involvement is increased as disparate groups join forces to develop a local playground project that meets their local needs.
- Playgrounds are a destination for community families and visitors.
- The communities' children learn skills for life while having fun.

Boundless Playgrounds applauds the Committee for its recognition of the importance of play in developing skills for life by providing inclusive opportunities for children of all abilities.

Boundless Playgrounds is indeed ready to stand with you in support of children's learning, social development, health and rights to public access of public playgrounds.

We are available to discuss the procedures for previous state funding legislation in support of building Boundless™ playgrounds. For our organization, and for children and families of all abilities who will be the real beneficiaries of your work, thank you.

Please feel free to call for further information.

Thank you.

Lisa Bigman  
Senior Director of Strategic Alliances  
Boundless Playgrounds®, Inc.  
45 Wintonbury Avenue  
Bloomfield, CT 06002  
Phone: (860) 243-8315 ext. 104  
Fax: (860) 243-5854  
lbigman@boundlessplaygrounds.org

