

To: Committee on Human Services

From Margaret M. McEvoy
218 Airline Road
Clinton, CT 06413

Date: March 13, 2007

Re: Testimony - Bill #7280

Thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of Bill #7280, obtaining Medicaid waivers.

First of all, I would like to start by expressing my thanks to the State of Connecticut for implementing a pilot program for autism spectrum adults who are not mentally retarded last year. I am the mother of a 23-year-old young woman named Shannon who is diagnosed with high-functioning autism.

As with many autistic children, Shannon was eligible for services through the local school district. The results of the services varied based upon the individual staff's knowledge of autism. After high-school graduation, we were told that most services stop in the State of Connecticut unless a person's IQ is under 70. Connecticut is only one of a few states that do not provide comprehensive, appropriate services for those on the spectrum unless they have a low IQ.

Since Shannon graduated from The Morgan School in 2002, her needs are not being met. This is not to say that there are not caring people trying to help. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (the only state agency she qualifies for) has assisted her in the past obtaining part-time employment. In the summer of 2002, they got her a job at a breeding kennel, which she enjoyed and seemed to do well. The following summer she called to see if she could return, but the manager wouldn't even return her calls. This past summer, she applied on her own and got part-time job at a local pharmacy. However, that only lasted three weeks as her condition caused

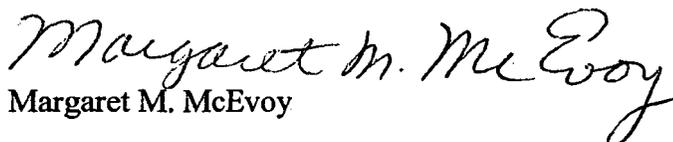
her to have difficulties. When BRS attempted to provide a job coach, store policy would not permit it. Without the support, Shannon failed. Recently, BRS has done some vocational testing with her, which hopefully will provide some guidance.

Shannon has had some successes. In many ways, she has exceeded our expectations. She can be very persistent in obtaining her goals. On the third time taking the driver's test, she passed and received her license. She is in her last semester at Gateway Community College. Hopefully, she will be awarded an Associates Degree in General Studies this May. She likes to sing and joined the Clinton Choral Club and is in our church's young adult group.

But, her limitations are very real. After college, her future looks questionable. She wants to earn a living and be independent, but she needs support. Autistic persons see the world differently than their "neurotypical" peers. To navigate the world, she and others like her need social skills training, independent living skills, career counseling, job coaching and peer support. People with Asperger's Syndrome/High Functioning Autism can be productive, TAXPAYING members of society if appropriate services are put into place.

Please support development of Medicaid Waivers that could change my daughter's life, and all those on the spectrum in this state for the better.

Respectfully submitted,


Margaret M. McEvoy