

**House Bill #7280**  
**House Services Committee**

My name is Dr. Ruth Eren and I am an assistant professor at Southern Connecticut State University in the Department of Special Education and Reading. At the university, I am the coordinator for the Masters Degree Program in Special Education with a concentration in Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities. In addition to my work at the university I also consult with school districts, parents, and private programs who are involved with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

I am here today to voice my strong support for **House Bill #7280, House Services Committee**. It is my understanding that this Bill will allow individuals with developmental disabilities without mental retardation, the opportunity to procure a Medicaid Waiver to fund much needed services as they move from the entitlement system afforded to them through the educational system to adult services based upon eligibility requirements defined by agencies of the State of Connecticut.

Although the educational system engages in thoughtful IEP transition plans to help individuals move from one system to the next, these plans often falter and become ineffective due to a lack of resources available to them as adult learners. By definition, Autism Spectrum Disorders and other Developmental Disabilities are life long disabilities and require a lifespan of services available to them in times of specific need in order for these individuals to attain and maintain a life that allows them to reach their full potential and acquire the necessary skills to reach personal and economic independence. In order to achieve this, these individuals require additional training and services beyond the age of 21 years. Do adults without disabilities stop learning at age 21? Do adults without disabilities terminate formal educational training and work experience after 21? Of course not! We should not expect individuals with developmental disabilities to terminate their education due to lack of resources sorely needed to acquire these critical services.

We are in a state of crisis in Connecticut regarding the population of adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities. These individuals and their families are in dire need of services that match their specific areas of need which will be varied due to the variability of needs inherent in this population. Individuals and families need to be given the resources that will allow them to make choices in regard to services that will allow them to attain a level of independence in adult living. We, in the State of Connecticut, cannot afford to allow limited opportunities, insufficient resources and inappropriate services to remain as a barrier for these individuals as they enter adulthood. Because, despite these barriers, one fact remains indisputable: throughout their adult lives individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities can and do continue to grow and develop as individuals when provided with the necessary supports.

I currently have the privilege of working with many individuals in this population through my work at the university and as a consultant. I have witnessed the personal and professional growth with many of these capable and intelligent individuals when they have been afforded the appropriate level of support that matches their individual needs .

They have much to offer the State of Connecticut as future citizens if the state continues to support their need for educational and training opportunities after age 21.

We are currently in a state of crisis in Connecticut as the number of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other Developmental Disabilities continues to grow into adulthood. We, as individuals and as human beings need to provide this population with the services they will require as adults. I ask that we all support **House Bill # 7280** in that hope that we can all enter adulthood with equal opportunity to achieve our own personal goals and growth as individuals. There should be no need for lengthy discussion or debate over this bill because we all know in our minds and hearts that it is the right thing to do as responsible and caring citizens of Connecticut.

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