

March 13, 2007

Bill #7280

Human Services Committee

Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the Human Services Committee.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to talk on this most important issue. My name is Lois Rosenwald, and I am here today wearing two hats. I am first and foremost the mother of a thirty-year-old who is an incredible human being, who happens to have Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism. Secondly, I'm here as Co-director of the Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center, Inc., a grassroots, family-driven center. We have been actively advocating for over 10 years to put in place services for adults with ASD without Mental Retardation.

Since I only have three minutes to speak, I'm going to choose the role of advocate, and speak to the reason why this bill needs to pass this session and not next session. If indeed a Medicaid Waiver is the way to go for our population, then we need to start that process as soon as possible. It takes over a year to apply for a waiver. I have been told it is a long, arduous process. For this reason, we are recommending that an outside consultant do the work. By the time an OK is given and services are up and running, it will most likely take two years. If this bill passes this session, and they start work in July and finish by July 2008, we will be lucky to see services in place by January 2009. This scenario depends on everything going well, and we know how that goes. The pilot finishes in 2008. We don't have any more time to waste. Without the supports that a waiver could

provide, many of our ASD adults will be on public assistance. I can't stress enough how severe the crisis is. We need services yesterday!

Over the ten years I have been advocating for ASD adult services, we have seen the incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders go from 3 in 1000, to the CDC's most recent number of 1 in 150. This is a crisis, a serious health concern, and one that responsible government can no longer ignore. These are real people, with real families that need your help. Please do the right thing and pass this bill this session. Don't make us wait any longer than necessary.