

Good Morning,

My name is Janice Galloway, our family lives in Brookfield. We are the parents of a 36 year-old daughter who has an Autistic Spectrum Disorder: Asperger's Syndrome. Because of our family experiences, I sit on the board of WeCAHR, an advocacy agency in Danbury, and also the Advisory Council for the Pilot Program that's the subject of Raised Bill 5666.

Our entire family believes that the Pilot Program should continue and expand as defined by Bill 5666. I've polled my colleagues at WeCAHR, and all twelve enthusiastically support it. The members of the Advisory Council have recently re-committed to support the Pilot Project, and more Connecticut citizens have applied to serve on the council as well.

In early 1995, we returned with our daughter to our home in Brookfield. She had just received a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome from the doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital after a difficult semester at Curry College. The sum of our information about Asperger's was on the several photocopied pages that we had been given. When we read and understood the words we were astounded. Here, at last, after all those painful years was a description of our daughter's problems that made sense! But what should we do? How should we help our daughter using this new information? We turned to the psychologist who knew her best, and he referred us to the state. We asked, and after many frustrating attempts at various agencies, discovered that there was almost nothing!

Well, she had worked with Bureau of Rehab Services during High School, and they did help a bit. They found our college-student daughter a job: as a grocery-store bagger. Then, after a few weeks, when she seemed to be doing well, they closed her case. When she encountered difficulties, as people living with Asperger's often do, professional help wasn't available because BRS rules said that they couldn't.

Now it is twelve years later, and Connecticut has a Pilot Program, based on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission Report prepared in 2002.

- The Pilot Program has a single point of entry system which guides the participants (and their families) through the maze of State services; unlike the chaotic array which we had to navigate.
- The Pilot Program is designed to give information that will eliminate wasteful one-size-fits-all services. Participants are getting the services that they need, determined by a sophisticated interview and follow-up process.
- Here's the most important part: participants now work with professionals that have been trained to work with Autistic citizens. In the past we've watched well-intentioned but poorly trained people try to help our family members. Time and money has been wasted on inappropriate 'solutions' that are doomed just because of poor understanding of what is needed for success.

Thank you for your consideration, we all respectfully request that the Pilot Program be continued and expanded so that Connecticut will at last be able to meet the challenge of providing sensible and efficient services for its autistic citizens.