

HB 5567
March 3, 2008

Chairman Handley, Chairman Sayers, and members of the Public Health Committee:
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5667.

My name is Abby Chargo. I am the proud mother of an articulate, outspoken, and very precocious five-year old daughter, named Emily. Emily was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes on her third birthday.

Like all parents, our greatest desire for Emily is that she grow up healthy, strong, and sure of her place in the world. But the care of a diabetic child is like being on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. To protect Emily from bouts of hyperglycemia or hypoglycemia, my husband and I check her blood sugar 8-10 times within a 24 hour period, including a midnight and 3:00 am check. She sleeps right through the nightly checks and is a real trooper when we check her blood sugar levels during the day.

The hardest part of diabetes for Emily has been when she was singled out and unable to participate in activities or receive the same treats as her friends. Nine months after her initial diagnosis, Emily was placed on an Insulin pump. The insulin pump changed her life as a diabetic and that of her family. The pump is easy to use and easy to teach. An adult calculates the amount of carbohydrates that Emily will eat at any given meal or snack. The pump then calibrates the dosage of insulin that Emily needs based on her blood sugar levels.

Emily goes to a small private Hebrew Day School in Danbury that had a nurse come one morning per week. Emily's first year at school on the pump was fairly simple, as her Daddy was the school principal. My husband trained her teacher in how to check her blood sugar and then administer the needed adjustments on the pump. This process takes about two minutes at most, but it must happen at least four times a day; for morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, and before any form of exercise. While the process is simple, her physical health and well-being depends on the adjustments being made to her pump.

This year, Emily started Kindergarten, and there was a new principal who was not comfortable with herself or any other staff person taking the responsibility for Emily's care. This was because the school's board informed her that only a nurse could administer insulin through an insulin pump. After a great deal of effort, we were able to procure a nurse through the district, but only for the first three hours of school. After a 504 plan was set in place, it was determined that in the afternoon hours a school aid could check Emily's blood sugar, but could not use the pump to make the necessary corrections.

Consequently, if Emily's blood sugar is low, she can easily be treated with juice. However, if her blood sugar is high, we, her parents must be on daily call to go to the school to administer the insulin ourselves. If we are not able to do so, because of work or other responsibilities, she simply remains high until we pick her up at 3:30 and make the changes on her pump. In addition, my husband or myself must accompany Emily on all school trips, something that she enjoys now, but will one day resent, as it singles her out from her friends.

Three times a week, Emily's entire school is given ice cream with lunch, and because no one is able to administer the insulin or treat the possible high blood sugar that may follow, she sits and watches as all of her friends eat the ice cream she cannot have. Even worse, when Emily's blood sugar runs high in the afternoon, it affects her ability to concentrate and focus on classroom activities. She is aware of this and I believe that it is slowly chipping away at her self-esteem.

This is simply not acceptable. There are many small schools that do not have a full-time nurse on staff, and there are many diabetic children who attend these schools and who are on insulin pumps. The proposed legislation would enable any well-trained paraprofessional to use the insulin pump to administer the care our daughter needs ensuring both her physical and emotional health.

Emily and I thank you for your consideration of HP 5667.

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