

## Testimony for House Bill 5666

Lisa Jameson

I was going to testify two years ago (Feb. 2006) when the pilot program was introduced, but I didn't get the chance. I will talk a little bit about what I was going to say then. Ryan has been in special education programs at school since kindergarten, and special schools since 7<sup>th</sup> grade. He was not diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome until he was 13 years old, because PDD (Autism) was not very well known at the time. Ryan tried to commit suicide a couple of times, but in June of 2004 the attempt was more profound, as a result, he has been institutionalized ever since. Ryan missed his brother's wedding, and when his brother's wife was killed in an accident six months later and he couldn't go to her funeral. Ryan has missed out on a lot of the things that we all take for granted. Because of his lack of social skills he says things that are inappropriate, and he is so trusting that he could easily be taken advantage of. I'm sure anyone here could think of a long list of scenarios that would get him in a whole lot of trouble. Because of the inappropriate behavior and things they say, they are subjected to being bullied, and when friends are made it doesn't last long. This causes so much hurt and anxiety all the time. As parents it also hurts us very deeply to see our children go through this. I would like all of you to think back to a time when you felt anxious, worried, or anguished over something that was important to you. Well this how people with Autism feel very often. Every parent has hopes and dreams for their children's future. But, because of

their Autism these dreams are shattered, We as parents grieve because of the loss of a normal life we want for them, just like parents who have children with physical disabilities. These young people are our future. With Autism on the rise reaching epidemic proportions wouldn't it make sense to help them now so that they can have the normal life we want for them? And that they themselves want. This can happen for most of them if given the proper treatment and care that they so desperately need. So why does our state, one of the richest in our nation making it so hard to get? Remember, this generation will be taking care of you some day.

Since then with God'S help I have managed to get these services from the state, but not without a lot of hard work and unbelievable persistence. Ryan is now 21 years old and has all the services in place that I've fought so hard for. Because of the fact that this state did not do this in the first place, they have spent well over a million dollars as a result. They could have saved an awful lot of money. This doesn't make any sense.

Thank You, sincerely, for taking this matter into consideration, and I will pray that you will find it in your hearts to expand this program to other areas of the state, because it works.