

301

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY:
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We are a family from Simsbury, CT. Our youngest son has autism, but is doing very well with the support of the Simsbury school system, especially the Ready Set Go program, as well as other community programs (i.e. Simsbury Parks and Recreation camps) ...and of course, the warm embrace of all our neighbors.

We would like to see the Senate Bill 301 passed because it is obviously unfair to our families to be excluded from coverage and benefits for bio-intervention and therapy sessions that are crucial to our children's development and overall health. The financial burden that these costs place on families and individuals stuck paying out of pocket is devastating. Due to the expenses, and the shortage of qualified providers coupled with long waiting periods for appointments, most of the families we know in our situation are in dire straits. It's simply inexcusable to deny treatments and therapies and family coaching to those with ASD.

I can't imagine how this group was ever overlooked or the omission at any time rationalized, but autistic people can absolutely be helped by these services and treatments. I know firsthand, and our success is not unique.

Our son was diagnosed PDD-NOS at age 2, and we were living in Maryland at that time. We moved to Simsbury before he entered kindergarten for the inclusive school program and LOVE the school and community here. Our son spends all day in his first grade classroom with a dedicated paraprofessional. He participates independently, has many friends and even won an award for being a good role model. He loves school and his friends, is an excellent student, and is very popular among his peers. He gets full credit for his success, but what he needed from us along the way was this:

Proper teaching techniques -- ABA, DTT, RDI and a combination of multiple strategies in a specific 'therapy cocktail' made to order for him specifically Communication bridges -- Speech therapy, visual aides (i.e. PECs) and playgroups led by trained, qualified professionals OT, PT -- Not being able to pick these up in early peer play, he still requires "basic boot camp" for core movement and on-going motor training to catch up Bio-intervention -- Thankfully we found ARI and Dr. Bernard Rimland, and made some changes that gave us instant results. He could not function without these supplements and changes in diet. The waiting period to see a DAN doctor is too long, and not covered. We

need more practitioners and more accessibility to these treatments, even if it's just nutrition and vitamin/mineral supplements -- no one should be excluded because of an ASD diagnosis!

Family coaching - Essential, this was our saving grace. We paid dearly, but won big in the end.

While we are doing well now, the harsh reality is that anything can happen anytime, and in particular during his teen years. I hope there's a safety net to be had through paying so much for insurance -- one that comes through for his medical and developmental needs throughout his life. That's 1 in 150 adults in just a short decade from now, and I guarantee that our Autism Speaks community is already instilling in our youth to take responsibility and be committed to advocacy and voting for a better future for ASD families. So while you're thinking and counting on their vote then, we need your vote NOW.

Thank you.

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