

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY:
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301

Patty Dobbs Gross
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Hello,

I would like to apply to testify for Senate Bill 301.

My name is Patty Dobbs Gross, and in addition to being the Executive Director of a nonprofit called North Star Foundation, which is dedicated to meeting the social, emotional and educational needs of children on the autism spectrum through partnerships with assistance dogs; I am also the parent of a child on the autism spectrum named Danny.

Danny has done quite well, and is about to graduate from UConn at Storrs with hopes of attending film school in the fall. He has a severe dysfluency, however, and for the past year we have been unable to afford speech therapy for him, which totally breaks my heart. Cigna supposedly will offer Danny 20 sessions at a \$45 copay for this year thanks to being forced to by the Attorney General, but it is my understanding that they are digging in their heels to not treat dysfluency, so I am not sure we will even be covered in this small way...

I would like to testify with a North Star dog, Rory, who accompanied Danny and I to the inauguration last week in the hopes of presenting a novel, cutting edge and very effective therapy for children on the autism spectrum...Rory is a North Star dog in training to work with a child on the autism spectrum in New Hampshire..here is a short clip Danny put together to commemorate our day:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE2hbp-e1xE>

I am attaching a handout about our philosophy for creating North Star placements with children who face social, emotional or educational challenges, and I believe that you'll also find our website helpful in understanding our nonprofit work
www.northstardogs.com.

You can see some North Star teams in action on the following site:

www.youtube.com/profile?user=northstarvids

Our work was also profiled in September's AKC Gazette, as well as last spring's Autism Spectrum Quarterly.

I have research conducted on our placements that document their effectiveness which I can send to you upon request.

Our work was recently featured by a Japanese television program, and this informative piece can be seen at:

http://www.suprememastertv.com/bbs/board.php?bo_table=download&wr_id=4169&goto_url=&sfl=ca_name&stx=aw&sop=and&url=link1

I have written a book about this emerging field, THE GOLDEN BRIDGE: A GUIDE TO ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR CHILDREN CHALLENGED BY AUTISM OR OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (Purdue University Press, July 2006) which will help you to understand this emerging field that hold such promise for children on the spectrum; I can get you this book along with several accompanying DVD that document our work upon request.

North Star is a nonprofit organization (EIN # 06-1589586; Conn. Charities Registration number 12811)dedicated to helping children who face challenges to achieve their social, emotional and educational goals.

Please let me know if you have any questions for me...

Kind regards,
Patty

Patty Dobbs Gross
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"We help children find their way."