Dear Chairman/Madam Chair:

My name is Steve Eversole and I'm here to speak in support of raised bill 6666. I've been a Board Certified Behavior Analyst since the Board began about 10 years ago. For the last 10 years, my company has been preparing behavior analysts to pass the certification exam. We also provide continuing education courses for behavior analysts.

Behavior analysis is based on rigorous scientific study dating back to animal research conducted in the early 1900s. Since the 1960s, there has been a movement to apply this science to social problems. In the past 30 years, experimentally validated technologies have been developed and applied to a variety of social problems, including but not limited to, children with emotional problems, children with developmental disabilities, and children with autism. The recent surge in autism has resulted in over 70% of the Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) working with children with autism. For several reasons, it is critical that these qualified professionals provide the services for our children with autism. I want to explain some of these reasons.

Scientific Support

First, there is a plethora of treatments for autism. Unfortunately, many of these aren't much better than snake oil and some can even be harmful. Clearly we want treatment interventions for our children to be based on scientific research. We don't accept anything less in medicine or the design of our automobiles and airplanes. We shouldn't accept anything less for our children burdened with autism. *Several independent reports have found that applied behavior analysis (ABA) has the most effective treatment interventions when compared to other disciplines.* I can get you a copy of these reports.

Erroneous Implementation of Methods

Second, when lay persons attempt to use applied behavior analysis, particularly with children with special needs, they almost invariably make errors. Even mental health professionals who are highly experienced and qualified in many ways, make fundamental errors. This is because behavior analysis procedures are often counter-intuitive. For example, it is not uncommon in some schools for an out-of-control child to be sent to the Principal's Office. This works in short run because the child's problem behaviors immediately stop. The Principal talks with the child and may even allow the child to hang out for awhile. A qualified behavior analyst would not only know that this is likely to be making the problem behavior worse, but she would also be able to effectively explain to school personnel how this is detrimental. She would also be able to recognize those rare instances in which this may be the correct strategy. But for the most part, she would develop strategies that reinforce appropriate behavior in the classroom. I could go on, but the point is that *you could almost guarantee that just about any implementation of a behavioral procedure will have at least some problems if developed and implemented by unqualified professionals.*

Least Restrictive

Third, we have a moral and legal obligation to provide the least restrictive treatment possible. Consider a child in a school program in which he is not learning. This is clearly a recipe for problem behaviors. As a result, the teacher ends up relying on coercive strategies to keep him in his seat and attending. *Behavior analysts can almost always reduce or eliminate reliance on coercive strategies.*

Incalculable Costs of Inadequate Intervention or No Intervention

Clearly the greatest cost of autism is the suffering it causes the person with autism and their family. While some cases of autism are mild, most are not. I've worked with many individuals with severe aggression, self-injurious behavior, and other behavioral challenges; and some of these problems last a lifetime, especially if inadequate interventions are not provided at an early age. Although we are experiencing an unprecedented increase in autism, at no time in history have we had the know-how to address this challenge like we have now. The research shows that we can help most children with autism if treated early. In so doing, *we can eliminate or at least minimize a lifetime of difficulties that cause so much suffering and distress for families.*

Long-Term Financial Costs of Inadequate Intervention or No Intervention

As a behavior analyst, I hate to speak about things without having data to support my claims. However, I would like you to consider the cost of providing life-long support for one individual in a group home or institution. Projecting forward, I would imagine this cost well exceeds $1 million. It is my understanding that the cost of implementing this bill is next to nothing. *I cannot fathom the possibility that the provision of ABA services by qualified behavior analysts would not prevent several individuals from receiving life-long support or institutionalization; thus saving the tax payers of Connecticut many millions of dollars; not to mention the savings to families of those with autism.*

Thank you for your time.