

Testimony

Submitted to the

Education Committee

March 23, 2009

SENATE BILL NO. 1139 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND THE ELIMINATION OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION GRANTS FOR COOPERATIVE REGIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION FACILITIES.

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Deanna Farrelly and I am a resident of Prospect. I am here today to ask that you vote no on SB 1139.

My daughter, Samantha, has had a connection to Soundbridge for 2 years and has benefited tremendously from the state of the art facility and services it provides. Without the State funding much of the cost of this building, my child with hearing loss would not be in the place she is today. Samantha was born with profound hearing loss in both ears. Her loss was severe enough that traditional hearing aids could not help her. Just before her first birthday she received her first cochlear implant, and she received a second implant at 18 months old. When it came time to transition from the Birth to Three programs to preschool, Samantha tested out 11 months behind age level in both her speech and her comprehension of spoken language. In addition to the delay in her development, our home school district, Region 16, had never before had a student with cochlear implants. Based on these two factors Region 16 decided that Samantha's interests would be better served by attending preschool at a specialized facility like Soundbridge rather than in her home school district. Samantha was re-tested last week in preparation for her return to Region 16 this fall to start Kindergarten. I am proud to say that not only has she made up the 11 months she started behind her typical peers, but in some areas she has tested as much as 14 months above her age level.

We are indebted to the high quality staff for the specialized care that is available for our special needs child because a center like Soundbridge exists with all latest technological equipment for my child. Regional centers like this one and others for children with other disabilities simply cannot be replicated in each school district. That would be fiscally imprudent.

Please do not support SB 1139 so that these opportunities continue to exist for my child and those that follow her.