



*More Than 10 Years of Families Helping Families*

March 8, 2010

**CT FEAT**

PO Box 370352  
West Hartford, CT  
06137-0352

860-571-3888

[www.ctfeat.org](http://www.ctfeat.org)

**BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS**

Beth Lambert  
*President*

Donna Cohen

Robert Shea, Jr.

Rosanne Craemer Shea

Elizabeth Curry

Denise Buckenheimer

Tricia Winter

**ADVISORY BOARD**

Michael Bennett

Roberta Daversa

Sue Frost

Education Committee  
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: HB 5425

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Beth Lambert and I am the President of Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT). I speak on behalf of my family as the mother of a 16 year-old boy that is severely autistic and on behalf of the over 300 families CT FEAT represents.

There are two separate provisions contained within this bill upon which I wish to comment – section 2 and section 3. CT FEAT supports section 2 but does not support section 3 of HB 5425.

The efficacy of applied behavior analysis is a direct function of the rigor of its application. The comprehensive application of ABA requires understanding and insight that can only be gained through the emersion in the subject provided by intensive graduate level study and controlled overseen application under the tutelage of a fully certified behavior analyst.

Too often, we have heard from parents whose children have not made progress in their applied behavior analysis program because the supervisor in charge did not have the proper training. To lose time to an inadequate program has great negative implications for children with autism. Children with autism have been suspended or removed from a public school because they had severe negative behaviors. Having a qualified behavior analyst to create and monitor a student's behavior plan may mean the difference between a child being educated at his local school or being placed at a segregated facility.

In 2002, Dr. Kathleen Dyer Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCBA did a research study that looked at the relationship between the number of essential components a child received in their programming and the overall quality of life outcomes for the children and their families. One of the essential components was therapy delivered and supervised by individuals trained in behavior analysis. The study found that there was, in fact, a correlation between quality of life outcomes and the quality of ABA programs. This bill will enable school systems to more easily determine qualified individuals. CT FEAT commends and supports section 2 of HB 5425.

However, section 3 of this bill that puts the burden of proof of efficacy of a program on the parent is a giant step backwards for the special needs children of Connecticut. The special education process is daunting to many of the parents of special needs children. Parents are frequently ill equipped to understand the needs of the child and the process of meetings and the array of acronyms is dizzying to the parent not familiar with the special education establishment. The education professionals are steeped in the process. They are usually trying to not only balance the needs of many children on minimal resources; they are frequently under tremendous pressure to push special education children into the lowest cost alternative.

The individual child is lost without a strong parent advocacy. This process is already heavily stacked against the family of the special needs child. The school district's team in the special education process is well versed in the process and in the goals of the individual district. These teams are prepared and practiced; most have participated in dozens if not hundreds of PPT's. This compared to the parents who frequently alone, not fully comprehend their own rights, the process or how to influence its outcome. At CT FEAT, we see parents every day that are daunted and intimidated by the process as it stands today. In Connecticut, many professionals have worked very hard to provide programs and services for our children; nonetheless, we see families unable to secure appropriate services for their special needs child under the current system. Tilting the balance further in favor of the school districts is unconscionable.

Section 3 will increase the need for consultants and lawyers to the families of handicapped children at a cost many cannot finance. It will in cases of less demanding parents result in children stuck in ineffective programs.

In these difficult economic times, it is important that we spend education dollars wisely. The provision in HB 5425 requiring proper certification of ABA professionals will make that education process more effective with little or no cost to the education system. We must however be sure that in these difficult times, we don't abdicate our responsibility to our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for this opportunity and your attention.

Sincerely,

*Beth Lambert*

Beth Lambert, President