

### *Testimony*

My name is Christina Calabro, resident of Ridgefield, CT and a mother of 2 children with Special Needs. Today I am testifying, asking you to please support section 2 of HB 5425. Autism has affected my family and I learned the hard way that we didn't see the results my child was capable of achieving until their program changed and became under the direction of a BCBA. My oldest child is the perfect case study that your ROI can be huge (quality of life changing) when an appropriate program is put in place under the supervision of qualified professionals.

This bill will insure that our children will receive behavior analysis from qualified professionals. Anything less is a disservice not only to my child--but to classmates, teachers, therapists, the school nurse, the principal, the bus drivers and the tax payers in our community. I have seen first-hand how a behavior program that was supervised by an un-qualified professional failed. We lost precious time—time that we will never get back. Hiring employees who are not qualified to provide these services also put school districts at risk of lawsuits. Please support section 2 of HB 5425.

Today I am also asking you to please oppose section 3 of HB 5425. The State of Connecticut has this correct; please do not support placing the burden of proof with the party who asked for the hearing, which in almost all cases is the parent. As education advocates, we parents fight for our children to have and maintain an appropriate education program. When this does not happen we are left with no other choice but to file for due process. We would fail as parents if we didn't do whatever is in our power for our children to have what is due to them. By changing the shift of burden you make it that much more difficult for us to do our jobs.

Please support section 2 and please oppose section 3 of HB 5425. Thank you for listening.