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CONNECTICUT

3/8/2010

To Whom It May Concern:

My names I John Molteni and I serve as an Assistant Professor and Director of the Autism Spectrum Disorders Initiative at Saint Joseph College and also serve as the President of the Connecticut Association for Behavior Analysis, a professional organization from whom you will hear testimony from today. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 5425: An Act Concerning Special Education Section 2 which stipulates that applied behavior analysis services provided to students as part of their Individualized Education Plan will be overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), Board Certified assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) under the supervision of a BCBA, or other professionals whose scope of practice includes applied behavior analysis. This section provides an important step in securing quality services for children with special needs by qualified individuals who have met specific education and training requirements. I would like to make a friendly suggestion to change the terms "autism" to "special needs" as the methodologies of applied behavior analysis have been utilized and have demonstrated effectiveness across various populations of individuals.

Evidence to support the use of behavioral interventions in the education, training and treatment of individuals with and without disabilities has grown in over 40 years of basic and applied research. The impact of procedures developed from the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), when implemented with fidelity, have led to improvements in behavioral functioning, rates of learning, acquisition of adaptive living skills, spontaneous communication, social skill development, staff performance and self regulatory behavior. The dissemination of behavior analysis at both the individual and organizational level is the subject of multiple journals within the specialty (e.g., *The Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* and *The Journal of Behavioral Education*), international organizations (e.g., The Association for Behavior Analysis International and The Association for Positive Behavioral Support) and subgroups of national organizations (e.g. Division 25 of the American Psychological Association).

The increase in prevalence in autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities over the past decade has fueled the need for improved educational and behavioral services across the lifespan. Programs utilizing applied behavior analytic procedures are now housed in public school settings, private schools, foster care, and home-based settings. The demand for individuals with training in ABA has also increased as it has been identified as one of the only interventions with a substantial evidence base (National Autism Center, 2009; National Research Council, 2001; NYS Department of Health Early Intervention Program, 1999).

Various state organizations (e.g., Department of Disability Services, Connecticut Birth to 3) and recent legislation (Public Act 09-115, 2009) have recognized applied behavior analysis services, BCBA's and BCaBA's under the supervision as part of their reimbursement programs. Certification as a behavior analyst has also been recognized in multiple states across the nation with regard to support services for individuals with special needs. This bill will allow students to receive services from individuals with a



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level of education and training that meet agreed upon competencies in Applied Behavior Analysis. Certification also provides protection to consumers (school systems, parents and students) by providing a mechanism to evaluate the qualifications of an individual and sets a standard of professional behavior that can be evaluated and acted on in cases of misconduct. Proof of certification is easily obtained from practitioners or researched by stakeholders (e.g., school systems and parents ) at the Behavior Analyst Certification Board website ([www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)).

Training programs in Applied Behavior Analysis generally consist of five, 3 credit courses or 225 hours of coursework for certificate programs whereas masters programs in Applied Behavior Analysis will consist of additional credit hours. In addition, 1500 hours of supervised clinical experience is required under the supervision of a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Programs in applied behavior analysis are currently available in two formats, online programs (21 programs) and on campus programs. Many of the online programs are run by leaders in the field of applied behavior analysis and are of the highest quality. Prior to the development of this program, the options for individuals in CT were to do an online program or leave the state to receive training. Despite these obstacles, the number of certified individuals in the state has increased. Within the past year, the number of certified individuals has increased from 134 to 185 without on campus programs in the state. Saint Joseph College just launched a program in Applied Behavior Analysis that has been approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® and the Connecticut State Department of Education. Supervision is also provided to those individuals who do not have a BCBA on site to supervise them. There has been a great demand for this program from educators, related services personnel (e.g., school psychologists and speech and language pathologists), parents and others seeking Master's degrees in Special Education. We are committed to providing education and training to individuals in the coming years through the Graduate Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis. There are four faculty members at Saint Joseph College who provide coursework and supervision for students interested in studying Applied Behavior Analysis. Eastern Connecticut State University has a training program for Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts. There have also been discussions of developing training programs at Southern Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University. Within driving distance from Northeast Connecticut, programs in the Springfield area are available such as that at Elms College which provides practical experiences at the River Street Autism Program at Coltsville in Hartford, CT.

In summary, HB 5425, Section 2, is a critical first step in ensuring that students with special needs who are to receive Applied Behavior Analysis Services as part of their educational program, will have this program overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst or other qualified professional as outlined in the section. Protection of all parties involved in the education of children with special needs is paramount as is the expectation that those professionals involved in Applied Behavior Analysis programs will have a level of competency to provide those services. This is and should continue to be an expectation of all individuals working with any student requiring special education services. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to advocate for students with special needs and those involved in their education and care.



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Sincerely,

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