



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 477

AN ACT CONCERNING A TAX CREDIT FOR MAKING JOBS ACCESSIBLE TO
EMPLOYEES WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

March 19, 2010

To: Senator Daily and Representative Staples
Co-Chairs, Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee

From: Shannon Knall
Autism Speaks Connecticut Advocacy Chairperson
Mother to nine year old with autism

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 477.

I write and speak first and foremost as the mother of a beautiful nine year old with autism. You may recognize the location below as the Connecticut Legislative Office Building.

He *is* the reason for any of my work advocating for people with autism and families affected by autism.

Jack has autism.

His future is my greatest worry.

With the right training, Jack will be employable and successful.

Without it, he will sit home, like so many adults with autism do today.

Autism is now occurring at a rate of one in 110 people. One in 70 boys are diagnosed. That is almost four children per hour.

Some statistics to consider from the 2007 Disability Status Report from Cornell University:

“The employment rate of working age people with disabilities (non-institutionalized) in the US was 36.9%. The rate for non-sensory and non-physical disabilities was even lower and averaging approximately 20%.

The employment rate of working age people without disabilities (non-institutionalized) in the US was 79.7%”

These statistics send a clear message; our country does a poor job of employing those with disabilities.

Connecticut can and should do better.

In January, a group of Connecticut legislators saw how our state could do better, with a tour of the Walgreens Distribution Center in Windsor.

Walgreens has committed to hiring people with intellectual disabilities like autism. Their D.C. in Windsor is a state of the art facility built to allow people with autism to succeed. As a result, the DC is one of the most successful in the country. Using this model, other Connecticut businesses can learn to work smarter, more efficiently utilizing this work force. In doing so, the state will benefit by creating an additional source of tax-paying citizens.

In recent years, this legislature has demonstrated it's understanding of the numerous issues that face the autism community by leading the country in affecting legislative change for us. Last year, Connecticut ended autism insurance discrimination in the state, making it only the 13th state in the country to do so.

Senate Bill 477 is a win for Connecticut, a win for Connecticut businesses and a win for people with autism.