

Testimony opposing SB 1105 re: provision of ABA services

Dear Education Committee:

My name is Erik Mayville and I am a resident of New Haven, CT. I am a licensed psychologist and a board certified behavior analyst and I routinely review educational programs for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). I have edited a book on effective behavioral treatment of autism and serve on three editorial boards of professional journals related to autism assessment and treatment. I have reviewed numerous programs in public schools in Connecticut, most of which require substantial revision to appropriately address students' needs. A common factor in the revisions is a lack of appropriately trained professionals in applied behavior analysis. This approach constitutes nearly the entirety of the evidence-base of autism treatment. It offers a well-tested problem solving system that can flexibly meet the varied needs of students with ASD.

I was pleased when the state recently mandated that students who required behavior analytic services would have to receive them from a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). It was spurred by a case in which several young children were harmed by someone who purported to have training in behavior analysis but did not. It is of course crucial that professionals providing specialized services of any type (i.e., educational, medical, financial) have formal education and supervised experience in their area of expertise so that they do not harm anyone, among other reasons. **However, SB 1105 will effectively sanction unauthorized practice by allowing professionals with no training in this area to practice it.**

As a professional with dual qualification in clinical psychology and behavior analysis, I can say from direct experience that the two fields are related but ultimately very distinct. A professional qualified in one is not qualified to practice in both, and doing so constitutes practicing out of one's field of expertise. In psychology, this is a violation of the American Psychological Association's code of ethics (Section 2.01: "Boundaries of Competence"). I am certain that The American Speech and Hearing Association and other associations of school-based service providers hold the same standards of their members. Thus, this bill will contradict a fundamental tenet of ethical practice of a variety of important disciplines. Further, a non-BCBA professional practicing under the auspices of SB 1105 might be no different in effect from someone fraudulently misrepresenting themselves as a behavior analyst and delivering bogus behavior analytic services to children with ASD.

Connecticut recently established itself as a leader in providing appropriate services to children with autism through the passage of several important bills. The passage of SB 1105 will undoubtedly reverse this progress and call attention to Connecticut as sanctioning unethical practice within several disciplines. I urge you to please vote against this bill.

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