



SAINT JOSEPH COLLEGE
CONNECTICUT

3/6/2011

To Whom It May Concern:

My names I John Molteni and I serve as an Assistant Professor and Director of the Institute for Autism and Behavioral Studies 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 opposition to Raised Bill SB 1105: An Act Concerning Special Education. I believe this revision to the law passed last year puts children with autism spectrum disorders at risk for watered down provision of services.

Last year, I was pleased to provide support for what is now Public Act 10-175: An Act Concerning Special Education Section 2 which stipulated 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 provided an important step in securing quality services for children with special needs by qualified individuals who have met specific education and training requirements. I continue to support expanding the term "autism" to "special needs" as the methodologies of applied behavior analysis have been utilized and have demonstrated effectiveness across various populations of individuals.

Through this legislation, the general assembly recognized the coursework and training requirements necessary to run such programs for children with autism in public school settings. This current legislation attempts to simply expand who can oversee a program without regard to their training in the methodology of behavior analysis. This is an irresponsible and dangerous path to take and will impact the effective of educational programs for students with autism. It would be akin to saying anyone with certification as an educator can do speech therapy. There need to be specific standards outlining the course work and training requirements needed to practice within an area and anyone that meets them can practice in that area. It was because of such loose regulations that made what happened in Norwalk, CT possible. The wording put forth by the attorney general, our current senator, last year was quite clear as to what was necessary to secure effective educational services for students with autism and to make drastic changes such as this before those regulations come into effect, is shortsighted.

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. There is no program in teacher preparation, speech and language pathology or other area that comes under the certifications listed in this bill in the state of Connecticut.



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In an informal summary of Directors of Pupil Services in CT conducted by The Institute for Autism and Behavioral Studies at Saint Joseph College in 2008, 28 respondents who identified themselves as administrators indicated that, if offered a choice of programs, an Applied Behavior Analysis program would be most desirable for staff pursuing graduate education. Currently there are 68 students matriculated into the Applied Behavior Analysis Graduate program at Saint Joseph College, many of whom are certified in another area of education including Special Education, Speech and Language Pathology, and School Psychology. There are an additional 11 educators and related services personnel enrolled in an off campus cohort arranged to meet the needs of school districts in that area. This cohort was developed at the school districts' request. 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. Given this demand, it is clear that there is insufficient training in undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs in applied behavior analysis and the application of its principles for individuals with autism. This would be true for other areas of educational practice as well.

In summary, Public Act 10-175 was 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.

Sincerely,

John D. Molteni, Ph.D., BCBA-D
Assistant Professor and Director
Autism Spectrum Disorder Initiative
Saint Joseph College
1678 Asylum Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06117
jmolteni@ajc.edu
860-231-5699