

## **Margaret Bustell statement re: SB-799**

My name is Margaret Bustell. I live in Norwalk and I am the parent of a child with autism and I am here today in support of SB-799.

I have a personal connection to this proposed legislation. A precious year and a half of my son's life was squandered under the care of Stacy Lore, a woman who posed as a board certified behavior analyst (BCBA).

When we were first introduced to Stacy Lore, our world was crashing around us. We had just learned that our son, Henry, had autism and we were desperate to do whatever we could to help him. She was already working in the Norwalk Schools and her resume was impressive – multiple degrees and most importantly, she was a Board Certified Behavior Analyst – BCBA.

Under Stacy's care, our son made some initial progress but then stopped. He became rigid and robotic. Saddest of all, was his inability to communicate. Our son was non-verbal at the time. He was unable to tell us when he was tired or hungry or to communicate basic needs. You cannot imagine how painful it is to not be able to reach your child, to hear him cry but not know what it is that he needs. Under Stacy's care, Henry learned sign language but it was animal signs, not signs like hungry or tired that would help him communicate his basic needs. I later learned that she taught him these signs because they were easy and that she wanted to show some success.

When we learned that Ms. Lore had faked her credentials, we were devastated. We had poured all our financial resources into our son's program, based on the fact that she had the BCBA certification. We trusted that she knew what she was doing but instead we squandered that small window of opportunity for recovery.

As soon as we learned that Lore was a fake, we moved our son into a full-time program with a legitimate BCBA. Under their care, he finally began to speak. It hasn't been an easy road. It took a long time for our son to 'unlearn' the bad behaviors he learned from Stacy and her untrained staff. He still perseverates on numbers and letters and struggles with social skills and things like how to have a conversation with a peer. It's hard not to think about where he could be had he received proper care during that crucial window. I personally believe, he would have been recovered.

Stacy Lore looked at our family – at our desperation to help our child – and saw some easy money. Now more than ever, as autism rates continue to rise, it is crucial that we protect Connecticut children from anyone looking to profit by posing as a BCBA and treating special needs kids. If SB-799 were already a law, Stacy Lore might not have been so bold in

her deceit and my son would not have been cheated out of his window of opportunity for recovery.

SB-799 is an important piece of legislation and I would like to personally thank Senators Bob Duff and Martin Looney and Representative Larry Cafero for their work on this.

The only bright light in the painful events of our encounter with Stacy Lore has been the legislation that has come in its wake. With the passage of this bill, we will send a strong message to anyone who falsely poses as a BCBA, that their fraudulent actions will have serious consequences.

Please pass SB-799 and protect children with autism in Connecticut from receiving fraudulent and ineffective care.

Thank you.