To members of the education committee:

I would like to state my opposition to S.B. 1105, the proposal to amend last year's bill related to the credentialing of individuals providing applied behavior analysis services to students with autism spectrum disorders.

I am a school psychologist with over 30 years of experience providing services to children and adolescents with a broad range of developmental disabilities. For the last 23 years, I have been the supervising clinician providing program development and training to clinicians and special education teachers who work with children on the autism spectrum. I have been a visiting professor at universities in Connecticut and am currently an Associate Clinical Professor in a graduate training program in autism and applied behavior analysis.

I was fortunate to be trained as a school psychologist in a psychology department devoted to behavioral therapies developed from research in applied behavior analysis. These methods and approaches to assessment, instruction, skill building, and progress measurement, have contributed greatly to the lives of children with developmental disabilities. Many are able to remain in the mainstream in their school settings as a result. Others are much more independent and need less assistance than those who do not receive intensive, ABA based instruction.

The research is clear that currently, the most effective treatment of autism requires expertise in applied behavior analysis. Unfortunately, most education professionals identified in the language of SB 1105 do not have receive this training. As a school psychologist, I recognize that most university training programs in education related fields, even those that are NCATE, APA, NASP approved, do not provide or require training beyond perhaps a single course in applied behavior analysis. And, until recently, there was little in the way of courses available on ABA and treatment of autism. While school psychologists may have one course in applied behavior analysis, special education teachers, social workers, and speech pathologists usually have no training in applied behavior analysis. I would certainly not profess to know how to do the detailed and important work of social workers or speech pathologists. Similarly, they are not qualified to develop and supervise ABA instructional or behavioral intervention programs.

Individuals who are successful in obtaining board certification in ABA have master's degrees in psychology or related field and complete at least 5 courses in applied behavior analysis, along with 1500 hours of supervision by a board certified behavior analyst, and a rigorous national examination. My experience has been that this is the minimal education to provide the necessary base for an educator to prepare, train direct care staff (including the child's teacher), and support individual programs for students with special needs.

Many of my colleagues in fields related to special education have chosen to pursue additional graduate training and board certification in applied behavior analysis but otherwise, they would not have the qualifications to provide oversight to ABA programs.

I ask that you do not support this bill. It is important to have individuals who are trained in applied behavior analysis to provide

supervision to develop effective and responsible treatment for children with special needs. We must require high standards and hire professionals who have knowledge of the evidence-based treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

Sincerely,

D. Michael Rice, PhD, BCBA-D