

Dear Esteemed Committee:

I write to speak in strong opposition to this bill. I have seen the thoughtful and careful work of this Committee as it has expanded the previously extremely limited rights of the population of students with autism. The ASD cohort is growing exponentially and peer-reviewed and highly credible longitudinal data is quite specific about the appropriate provision of Applied Behavior Analysis. It is the best opportunity these children have to become verbal and in control of their own lives. It should be offered and supervised by highly and specifically trained individuals.

I teach Special Education law at the University of Connecticut School of Law, and have been a pro bono representative for children in special education for well over 20 years. Most have had autism. Moreover, I was blessed with a son only twelve years ago, and he has a rather significant and unusual form of autism. Silent for two years, he began to finally speak again after intensive ABA was offered for >20 hours a week by a skilled ABA therapist and delivered in conjunction with intensive speech therapy. We (correctly) credit ABA with saving our child from a life of silence and pain. Today, he is a mainstreamed 7th grader, enrolled in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, and with a 100 average in Algebra. He is on the honor roll every semester. He is still profoundly autistic in terms of his sense of self and others, but now faces the prospect of doing something useful with his life and society, an option that would not be open to him without ABA as provided by a trained and license practitioner. His intellect, hidden by a veil of silence and self-stimulatory behavior, emerged with the training offered by ABA. We expect that he will be able to attend college in some way.

I testified before the Committee on Higher Education last Thursday, March 3, and found the legislators to be concerned, empathetic and interested in making the right decisions. I hope that in this Committee the same concern is apparent. It is right to keep ABA where it belongs.... with well-trained professionals. They literally

have the power to give a life back to a child, and this is too important a responsibility to delegate. Children with ASD have already been dealt a very bad hand by the fates. To dilute their best hope at rehabilitation seems doubly-cruel. I know that the committee does not want to offer sub-standard services to this population, and that is what is proposed. I ask that you reject it.

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Education law

Mother of child with autism

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