

Ashley M. Bates
HB 5537

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition of HB 5537 Section 42 (6), a bill which proposes the expansion of Speech and Language Pathology services in Connecticut to include the provision of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). I am a Senior Behavior Analyst at the Connecticut Center for Child Development (CCCD), a school for students with Autism, where I have worked for 2 years. Prior to my employment at CCCD, I worked for 2 years at a private agency providing behavior analytic services for children residing in therapeutic foster homes. I also hold a teaching certification in Special Education from the state of Connecticut. I always knew I had a passion for working with children with special needs, hence why I pursued a master's degree in Special Education. However, it was about mid-way through my master's year that I realized my true passion was for Applied Behavior Analysis. I realized I needed to change my path and pursue the coursework and supervised fieldwork necessary for me to obtain a board certification in ABA. I knew this would take time and dedication, but I had enough respect and passion for the science to meet the requirements in hopes of obtaining a career I loved in the future. Fortunately for me, I did meet those requirements and I do have a career I love. When I heard about what this bill is proposing, my first feeling was confusion. Is this to say that because Speech and Language Pathologists and Behavior Analysts both work with a similar population, that the jobs and qualifications are interchangeable? In comparison, would we allow a cardiologist to perform a neurosurgery just because they are both surgeons? I think such a notion would be met with the words "unlawful", "unethical", and "unsafe". After the feeling of confusion came the feelings of disappointment and anxiety. As I'm sure most of the professionals in the field of special needs services do, I refer to my students as "my kids". It disappoints me and makes me nervous to think that it is assumed "my kids" are a one size fits all population; that a bill has underestimated their complexity and value. I can only imagine how the families of these individuals feel. I have had the pleasure of working with many highly skilled SLPs and Behavior Analysts. I believe the special needs population of Connecticut should be entitled to the best possible services, and this means expertise from both of these service providers. Please consider the opinions of the very knowledgeable and concerned professionals and parents that have provided testimony and revise this section of the bill.

Thank you,

Ashley M. Bates, M.A., BCBA
9 Thorson Road
Oxford, CT 06478