

Sarah Annis-Haynes
Written Testimony submitted to the Public Health Committee
Re: In Favor Of HB 5558
March 18, 2014

Good morning/afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Sarah Annis Haynes. I am a registered voter in the town of Winsted and the step parent of two children, one who whom is diagnosed with PDD-NOS, an Autism Spectrum Disorder. I am writing today in Favor of HB 5558.

Permanent Markers are an essential tool to any parent. We use it to mark toys, book bags, jackets, etc with our kids' names or initials to signify that this belongs to them. We do this in hopes that when they leave their irreplaceable, favorite stuffed animal dog in the grocery store, it may get returned.

In our house, the permanent marker became more significant over the years. At the mere age of four my now stepson was sent to the hospital for "flipping out." This little boy who had a hard time communicating to the world what he needed turned to being aggressive to get what he wanted. This little boy couldn't even open up a single carton of milk or put a straw in a juice box but here he was in a room with four white concrete walls and just a bed. Over the next several years we repeated this scenario over and over again. Each time I took out the permanent marker and marked his clothes, his stuffed animals with his initials, hoping that maybe we would get a quarter of them back. Each time we would get a different diagnosis and another set of pills.

It wasn't until the school sent him for a Neuropsychological evaluation that we heard the acronym "PDD-NOS." Yet we didn't know what that meant. We didn't know that this child needed a sensory diet, and how even a piece of gum could help that. We didn't know that

meant he needed extra time to process, so don't ask 30 questions all at once. We didn't know that meant we needed a routine, a schedule of what was happening next to calm his nerves. We didn't know that it was ok for him to rock back and forth while he sat or that it was ok for him to flap his hands while jumping up and down when he was happy. If we had known earlier, maybe he wouldn't have been traumatized so many times when he went to the hospital, as there were no other options. Maybe if we had known what that diagnosis meant we could have done things differently. Maybe if we had had in-home support, behaviorists to help us, we could have helped this child sooner. If maybe we had had all of this, we could have not been left like so many other families...wishing that they, too, had stock in Sharpie.

I urge you to please pass HB 5558, An Act Concerning Services for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Families cannot afford to wait for these crucial services and supports.

Thank you for your time.

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