

I am contacting you today because my son, Michael, who is 15 years old will soon become an adult and face looking for housing, schooling, employment and leisure in this fast-paced global economy. Did you know that Young adults and adults with the highest functioning form of autism – Asperger’s Syndrome- are often unemployed or underemployed (say, working by bagging groceries or at a library check out)? Not only is this a shame – but it is a waste of resources as this population is often the most loyal, committed, and trustworthy. The statistics are staggering and deflating – 70% of young adults and adults like my son remain unemployed and under employed. The situation is not improving, in fact – it’s getting worse. I know this committee can help us correct this problem.

Because my son is on the autism spectrum, many community services will brand him as “not competitively employable” simply because he will require an extended time period of support and coaching in the community and on the job. Those with autism take longer to learn, they need things broken down, and they must rehearse and practice until they get it right. Often, even after they have mastered a concept, they will need a refresher to keep them moving in the right direction. It is not a lot – a reminder, a visit from a job coach, a mentor, or a meeting with the human resources department. It takes so little yet without the support, a life of dependency, isolation and stagnation is the result. It is wrong that these young adults and adults are falling through the cracks – being discriminated against because they do not have a low enough IQ yet they need too much of a long term commitment to be supported while living an independent life. Essentially, they are "not disabled enough" to receive support from one agency, yet "too disabled" to qualify for support from the other! How could this be? They fall into a vacuum.

Even if my son were to apply for DDS, did you know the waiting list for services (which Michael will most likely not qualify for yet needs desperately) is five years? Five years! And, I’ve been told, my son is at the tip of a tidal wave of young adults transitioning into adulthood. This is what the future of autism is faced with. I believe it is shameful and will be disastrous for Connecticut in the very near future as the numbers multiply. We can do better and you can begin this process for this underserved, vulnerable population who will thrive independently with services.

Connecticut does not provide services for adults who have Autism Spectrum Disorders but do not have mental retardation and Michael will be 21 in five short years. I am writing to you about Bill No HB5558 which would expand services for those living with Autism Spectrum Disorders and I urge you to support it. Michael can live and work in the community as a productive member of society but not without the appropriate supports! This bill will allow for Michael to access these supports and live up to his fullest potential. You can reach me at 203-767-2542 mrembish1@yahoo.com.
Respectfully submitted,

Tina L. Rembish
3425 Park Avenue Fairfield, CT06825-1500

