



## CCSN: THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

2300 Main Street Glastonbury, CT 06033 • 860.430.1762 office • 860.430.1767 fax

[www.ccsnct.org](http://www.ccsnct.org)

March 17, 2015

Re: SB 1089 An Act Concerning Mental Health Services

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee,

I am Dr. Michael Powers, Founder and Director of CCSN: The Center for Children with Special Needs and the Center for Independence, the largest private center for diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and related neurodevelopmental disorders in Connecticut. I am also on the Clinical Faculty of the Yale Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine. I am writing in support of SB 1089, Sections 23-29. As a licensed psychologist and clinician working with those with Autism Spectrum Disorders across the lifespan and their families for nearly 40 years, I can attest to the significant need for scientifically validated treatment for those individuals, but also to the paucity of practitioners who are qualified to provide these services. Over the past 60 years the field of Applied Behavior Analysis has articulated, through rigorous empirical research and corresponding clinical practice, its pre-eminence as an assessment and treatment technology for those with complex learning and behavior problems. With the advent of Applied Behavior Analysis as a specialized field of practice, including defined academic training and supervision, and the development of rigorous standards of practice by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board, we now have available a group of practitioners specifically trained to meet the rapidly expanding needs of some of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens.

Applied Behavior Analysis is a well-established discipline with an extensive body of scientific research over the past 60 years validating its efficacy. Practitioners working in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis design methods of changing behavior to accelerate learning and teach skills that are essential to improving the quality of life and level of independence of the individual they serve. With a clear focus on habilitation, behavior analysts are uniquely positioned to develop skill repertoires in children, adolescents, and adults whose more substantive developmental and behavioral challenges would otherwise limit them to highly restrictive learning opportunities and community activities of their lifespan. Individuals with this training serve and provide services to the most challenging population of individuals in our community, including but not limited to children and adults with developmental disabilities, autism, traumatic brain injury, and behavior disorders. Licensure of behavior analysts will provide families, public school districts, the Department of Children & Families, the Department of Developmental Services, private insurance providers, and Medicaid providers a means of regulating the practice of Applied Behavior Analysis. Most importantly, however, licensing of behavior analysts will increase consumer protection and consumer access to essential services.

As a licensed psychologist, and an individual who through graduate training and practice has written extensively on behavioral assessment and treatment, taught university courses on this content, and trained and supervised practitioners through the years I highly respect and value the technology of learning and behavior change that behavior analysis can bring to the lives of children and families. It is essential to note that licensure of behavior analysts will not impact the scope of practice for other professionals, including licensed psychologists, as SB 1089

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has incorporated specific language which protects the rights of these other professionals and recognizes the scope of *their* practice, including where that scope of practice includes the practice of behavior analysis.

Connecticut's most vulnerable residence, throughout their lifespan, have been fortunate over the years to receive highly effective assessment and intervention by clinicians with expertise in Applied Behavior Analysis. As a professional who has worked in Connecticut for over 25 years, I can personally attest to the changes that have been brought about in public schools, community and vocational settings, adult habilitation facilities, and most importantly for individuals and their families with the increased opportunity for these clinical services. As a matter of both enhancing consumer access and simultaneously ensuring consumer protection I strongly urge passage of SB 1089 supporting the licensure of behavior analysts in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. If any further information or testimony is needed, I can be reached at 860-430-1762.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Powers, Psy.D.

Licensed Psychologist and Director

CCSN: The Center for Children with Special Needs & The Center for Independence

Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychology

Yale Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine

MDP/seh

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