

**Testimony of Tim Bettinger, Alexander Stratton, Heidi Appleton,
and Morgan M., Transition Education Students,
Horizons, Incorporated, South Windham, Connecticut
to the
Transportation Committee
SB 487 "AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPORTATION OF
ADULT STUDENTS IN TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS"**

February 09, 2015

Good morning (State) Senator Maynard, (State) Senator Leone, and honorable members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Casey Lenihan, and I am a Teacher with Horizons -- a private nonprofit agency located in South Windham. Our agency has been in operation for 36 years and provides individualized supports and services for people with special needs where they live, learn, work, and play. Horizons is a member of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits. Heidi, Tim, Alex, and Morgan, the transition education students before you today, receive supports from Horizons on Eastern Connecticut State University's campus.

These students speak before you in support of SB 487 "AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPORTATION OF ADULT STUDENTS IN TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS."

In late July 2014, transition education providers received an email from the State Department of Education stating that student transportation vehicles must have large yellow "Carrying School Children" signs on the top of vehicles and large placards on the sides and rear of vehicles with the name of the agency, the agency's phone number, and the vehicles' fleet number (refer to picture of Horizons' vehicle). These students wanted to explain to this committee the reasons they oppose these new requirements. They felt most comfortable testifying collectively; therefore, I will relinquish the floor to them, so they can speak for themselves. Thank you.

Heidi

- We have disabilities, we don't need a sign to prove it
- It's an appearance to those who see the sign on campus, they may think that we are different and always need help. We use skills that we have now so we can be independent now and in the future
- We go to college classes/ atmosphere, we don't need the sign on it to make us feel we aren't like one of them

Tim

- Carrying school children signs are degrading in my opinion I am looked at as a legal adult by the government, I graduated high school, and I can vote. Children aren't able to vote because their frontal lobe is not fully developed therefore they do not make fully

educated decisions, I am 19 my frontal lobe is indeed fully developed therefore I can make well thought out, educated decisions.

- I have been picked on because of the fact that I was in special Ed, because I was called out of class to do things that the other students didn't have to do. A big reason was because I was driven in by a van with a sign on it that read "carrying school children." It's hard to maintain a good self-esteem when everyone looks at you like you are unequal and that sign on top of our van pretty much amplifies the fact that we have a "disability"
- In conclusion, I have a disability, I don't even like to think of it as a disability, to me it's just an obstacle. I have to work harder to do things but that does not in any way, shape or form mean that I am a child. In fact I think the fact that we admit to having a disability and the fact that we have to work a little harder on things is a pretty adult like thing to do.

Alex

- Everyone is 18 years or older
- Children don't vote because they are held to different standards and they might not understand how to vote or what they are voting for.
- We do not attend high school, we are in a post-secondary vocational program at a college
- I have professional, adult expectations when I work with the maintenance crew. I don't need a sign to make me seem different because it degrades my appearance at college.

Morgan

- We don't need the sign on our transportation because we are over eighteen and go to a college transition program. We are part of the Transition Partnership through Horizons. We are all different including myself, but nobody likes to be treated that way.