From: Lisa Souza [laws65@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, October 08, 2012 10:01 AM
To: Veltri, Victoria
Subject: Written testimony for Oct. 17th for CT Feat

To Whom It May Concern,

I'd like to have my testimony heard, as I cannot attend the CT FEAT meeting in person. As a single mom with as Autistic child, just earning a living in today's economy can be a challenge. Every PTO day is used on doctor's appointments, sick days for him, and specialists visits.

Having a child with Autism is, in and of itself, a challenge everyday of my and his life. His medications out of pocket expenses are well over $600 a month! He has a 55 page IEP, and we receive no help from the State of CT. He has been to Focus Alternative Learning Center in Canton but that was many years ago and I had to get DCF involved thru Voluntary Services. He doesn't qualify for that any longer.

When he did, he was attending Hartland Elementary, I have over 365 emails to the Principle documenting bullying situations that were never seen by anyone at the school! He had bruises on his back and wanted to kill himself at age 8 because he was stupid. His Psychiatrist wanted to inpatient hospitalize him if I returned him to that same school, as I had outplaced him on my dime. I went through three Special Ed Hearings representing myself, as a Special Ed Attorney wanted over $30k, which I didn't have. So, I sold my home in four days and moved to a better town.

I fight on a daily basis for my son to obtain just the basic services the school is to provide in his IEP. He has no friends, real friends, and is acutely aware of how different he is and just wants to be a normal kid. We've applied for BRS, the Autism Program, DMR, etc all to be denied because his anxiety is situational and his IQ is a maddening 3 points above the DMR threshold. Mind you, this is a child who cannot wake up on his own, cannot remember to take his expensive meds each morning, brush his teeth, make his bed, etc without consistent reminders from me. Yet, he qualifys for absolutely nothing? If I have a meeting at night and he is home with one of his sisters, he won't go to sleep until he knows I'm home. I have had to fight tooth and nail for each and every small thing that he does have in his IEP, and that goes along with an Advocate bill that is creeping up to $2k as I have had her since the Special Ed Hearings in Hartland and that consistency is key for a child like Dylan. A move, a change of teachers, a change in furniture in his room can send him in a tailspin-yet we qualify for nothing.

Kids like Dylan are all over, some diagnosed with Autism, some not fully diagnosed. These kids are growing up in a system and State that is sorely lacking, and yet they are expected to function like normal human beings their age, who are scared enough, never mind having such a disability. What happens to these kids as they age out of the school systems? Is Dylan to go to a program in town for very low functioning kids? Do I sell my house and rent so I have the cash to pay for what he really needs? If I do, I leave absolutely nothing for my children when I pass. And that is the cold hard truth of what my reality is and has been for 17 years. Dylan is just above the IQ, but if you give him a dirty look, or yell at him in frustration, he is throwing up at you're feet, and gets a migraine within a half an hour. Is this how the State wants these kids treated? The bureaucracy that I've run into over his life is enough to choke a horse, and yet I keep being vocal and keep fighting, fighting for what he absolutely deserves! I pay my taxes, take care of my children, work full time, go to school myself, and do my very best to fight for him. I can't tell you how personally frustrating to tell you how maddening it is to speak to someone at DMR and they see his first IQ score and immediately dismiss me. I'd love to see his IQ score when he's upset-it would be so different, as IQ's can change as well. The State needs a much better way to determine eligibility for kids with Autism-period!

Please help me help my child. Compared to an average child, his IQ is so low, I stay awake at night worrying about what his future will bring.

Should you need to contact me, I can be reached at the following:
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