

Liz Scillian
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]
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THIS TESTIMONY IS IN SUPPORT FOR SB1000

Senate Public Education Committee Hearing

March 27th 2007

I'm Liz Scillian. My 8-year-old son Mason was diagnosed with autism 6 years ago.

Last year, I help form Texas Parents for Autism scholarships. This group is made up solely of parents of children with autism. We are not affiliated with any political party or special interest group. We have never taken donations from anyone, including lobbyist. This group is not part of some bigger agenda to bring vouchers to Texas. We are simply tired, stressed out, worried parents who are looking for better solutions to educating children with autism.

SB 1000 is not a voucher bill.

Voucher bills are typically for students who want to attend a private school because either the parent or the student simply does not want to go to public school. SB 1000 was developed because each student with autism has such unique needs that they require a teacher who is specifically trained and a program that is tailored to meet each child with autism individual needs. This is not always available in public schools. Many parents who support this bill have other typically developing children in public school. The goal of most of these parents is to get their child with autism back into the public school — but only when they believe they can be successful in that setting.

So why don't we just fix public education?

Last legislative session I was involved in a bill passed by the Senate that would improve public schools for students with autism. The bill was to form a committee and study the autism supplement and report to the commissioner our recommendations. Well, the committee completed their assignment a year ago, but there has been no movement by the TEA. While the TEA slowly moves about their daily business, more students suffer with inadequacies in the system, more children are diagnosed and in Texas the educational practices for children with autism remain the same as it was 25 years ago. On a side note, this legislative session a

House bill has been filed to form yet another committee, which has the potential to eliminate the autism supplement all together.

What about the money?

Children with autism are expensive to educate — sometimes triple that of the average student. As guardians of our state dollars you all need to ask yourselves, 'Are we spending those precious dollars wisely?' I know with my son more money would have provided a nicer learning environment, but money would not have changed the core issue — how we teach these children. For my child, his school district could not handle his severe and unique needs. He learned nothing in public school – yet the state of Texas spent a lot of money on him. My only option to improve the public education of my child was to spend a ton of money on legal fees of which we were not prepared to do. Unfortunately, this seems to be where the school districts are spending a lot of their time, money and energy.

According to National Educator Law Institute (NELI) 6th Annual Assessment Boot Camp brochure, "Autism is one of the most highly litigated areas of special education." This same group of Special Education Attorneys is granting our teachers 7.25 hours of continuing education credits to learn how to develop a legally defensible IEP for students diagnosed with autism. Personally, I don't want my public education tax dollars going to lawyers when they should be going to the educators. I guess it's just a lot easier to teach someone to write a legally defensible IEP goal than it is to actually learn how to teach a child with autism.

I would like to end by sharing that my son is making significant improvements in his current program, and I hope that someday he will be able to return to public school. I would like to see more children with autism in Texas have access to educational opportunities that will permit them similar success.

Thank you for your time-

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]
Date: March 26, 2007 2:24:44 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

My name is Paula [REDACTED] and I am the mother of [REDACTED]. This letter is my testimony in support of SB 1000. My address is [REDACTED] Arlington TX [REDACTED]. My phone number is [REDACTED] and email address is [REDACTED]. Please contact me if you have any questions or want more details concerning this letter.

I want to address a problem with the Texas Congress members concerning my son's public education. He was enrolled in the special ed skills class at [REDACTED] Elementary, Arlington, TX. His educational needs were not being met. According to the law he is to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) that MEETS HIS NEEDS. I have addressed my concerns with the ARD committee and the special ed director.

I observed in the classroom many things preventing him from receiving a FAPE. A partial, but not all encompassing list includes:

1. PECS (picture exchange communication system) being done incorrectly.
2. He was "stimming" much of the day.
3. Nothing was being done to truly improve his socialization or improve his eye contact.

He was being plugged into a "cookbook" type program (as are all the other children in the class) and works on skills that aren't appropriate for his level of learning.

In the fall of 2005 my husband and I requested that [REDACTED] be allowed to leave for half the day so he could participate in medical therapies that would help him learn eye contact, socialization, PECS and OT to decrease his stimming. An ARD was called and the school stated they needed [REDACTED] ALL DAY in order to provide him with an appropriate education. We then requested he be given 20 hours a week of ABA (applied behavior analysis) therapy, 1 hour a week of individual speech therapy (ST), and 1 hour a week of individual occupational therapy (OT). Evaluations were done by the school and the parents accepted later in an ARD 15 mins a week of individual ST, 30 mins a month of individual OT and the autism specialist to visit the class once a month. The parents did not agree that [REDACTED] could not be allowed to leave for medical therapies. We did make concessions with most of our requests and did leave [REDACTED] school all day with few exceptions.

If you look at a history of my son's case you will see the parents requesting more services and the school providing him with minimal services that do not allow him to make reasonable progress. You will see that his parents requested to take him out for part of the day to enhance his progress by providing more therapies and services. The school would not allow this, but gave the parents assurances that he would be monitored and would make progress with his new IEP.

If you look at his IEP you will see that goals are being met. However, I have questioned the accuracy of his report card. I requested that the school demonstrate [REDACTED] ability to perform some of the skills in his report card at the rate of success documented. They refused, stating that the data was correct and historical (even though it was from the last 6 week grading period). His IEP may show he is making progress in different areas, but [REDACTED] was not able to replicate it in real life.

There was another problem within my son's classroom. He was moved to another class because his teacher was verbally abusing him. Another parent removed her son to home school him because of the verbal abuse he encountered during the same time my son was moved. I have also spoken with another mother who encountered this same problem with her son a number of years ago. When an autistic child is yelled at it can cause them to regress instead of progressing forward.

The unwillingness of AISD to fully utilize ABA teaching methodologies for its autistic students is preventing many of these students from reaching their full potential. The resistance of AISD to change in this area of teaching has left this school district using archaic methods to teach our special education children.

I encourage AISD and all Texas public schools to look outside their own borders and see what other more progressive school districts have been doing to implement ABA techniques. Other parts of the country like California, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York & Washington D.C. have been providing ABA services for years. The recent changes in IDEA mandate that schools use research based methodologies to teach our special ed children. ABA techniques have proven positive results.

My son is currently enrolled in a private program utilizing intensive ABA techniques and he is making much more progress than when he was in the public school system. He is 7 years old (soon to be 8) and is finally learning to initiate communication. He is learning to play with toys (instead of merely stimming with them). His aggression has dramatically decreased, and he is well on the way to being "potty trained" (he can control his urination, but not bowels yet). We have worked on his potty training for 2-3 months versus the public school working on it for 2-3 years.

If I have to place one main goal for [REDACTED] in life, it is to be able to live with his parents instead of being institutionalized. It was clear to me that if he couldn't communicate, and we couldn't get control of his aggression, he would have to be placed in an institution as he got older and larger. I hope you all realize the consequence for not providing these children with an appropriate education may cost the Texas taxpayers much more money in the long run. However, if these children are appropriately educated, lower functioning autistic children may not have to be institutionalized, and higher functioning children may turn into taxpayers. Let's also not forget that many of these children can be cured. The benefits an appropriate education far outweigh the cost.

I hope and I want to see changes in the public schools, but am disillusioned by the lack of apparent progress in Kevin's situation. I am not willing to let my son continue in a school system that does not meet his educational needs. I support SB 1000 and encourage the members of congress to support it. Something needs to be done to provide these children with an appropriate education.

[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I am a Mother of a 6 year old child with Autism / Asperger's syndrome who has been in both Pearland ISD and Round Rock ISD since August of 2005. Our overall feeling is that there is a desperate need for individuals with extensive training in educating children across the Autistic Spectrum in Texas schools. We have been fortunate to work with an Autistic Team in our district, but the team is understaffed. Unfortunately, the population of autistic children is too large for them to provide the amount of teacher training necessary to appropriately educate our autistic children. I would also like to make it clear how phenomenal we feel it is that Round Rock ISD has an Autism Team and how wonderful that team is. Unable to afford the type of education that was recommended our son receive we saw Round Rock as our best hope at an appropriate education for him in Texas and relocated to Round Rock in 2006. It has been proven that the most appropriate setting for a child like our son to have the best chance at a successful future is in a regular education classroom. This is due to the fact that his chances at success socially and academically increase dramatically in a setting where he is able to learn from and 'model' his 'typical' peers. However, regular education teachers in Texas are not given proper training to appropriately teach autistic children.

I have found that specific autism training is often given to the teachers once the autistic child is placed in the class and that is too late. 'On the job training' is not good enough and it is currently what is realistic due to a lack of budget. Considering the number of high functioning autistic children and/or children with Asperger's syndrome that are not diagnosed until the 3rd grade, it is extremely important that teachers first be trained to recognize the signs of this disorder. Teachers have an overwhelming responsibility to teach children of all abilities and to ask them to do so without proper training shows utter disrespect for the profession. I would imagine that we will begin to lose our excellent teachers as the increasing population of autistic children continues to enter our schools and our teachers find themselves unprepared for the opportunity to educate them. If I am not mistaken, there is already a shortage of special education and regular education

elementary teachers in the state of Texas. Special education teachers are trained to teach all students across all disabilities and, in my experience, many seem to have no specific training in the area of autism. I want to reiterate that everyone we have worked with in Round Rock ISD has been great, but they can only do so much with the amount of staff and training that they have been given the budget to work with.

I am strongly in favor of a scholarship for children with autism to receive private education. I also can not stress enough the immediate need to provide extensive training for special and regular education teachers in our public schools to learn to teach children with autism both socially and academically.

Sincerely,



Senate Hearing on SB 1000 Autism Education bill on Tuesday 3/27

Written Testimony of Camber [REDACTED] – Parent of [REDACTED] (Age 12)

Dear Texas Senators –

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony surrounding SB1000. My name is Camber [REDACTED] have a 12-year-old son [REDACTED] who has Asperger's Syndrome [REDACTED] has been in the Richardson public school system for 8 years. He started in the PPCD (Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities) and repeated the first grade. He is now in the 5th grade, with one year left in elementary school. In our 8 years in RISD, last year was the first time a representative from the District's Autism team attended [REDACTED] ARD meeting. The only reason that they attended that meeting was due to my inquiry as to whether I should have an attorney attend to ensure that [REDACTED] would receive additional services that I felt he needed. I have had to be very proactive in obtaining resources from my school district for him.

RISD has a very non-tenured and small autism team and program, and few apparent resources to work with these children. The educational Region offers a minimal amount of training or courses on Autism Spectrum Disorders, but neither the state nor the district require any teachers to attend these sessions. If they do attend, it is at their discretion and they have to provide coverage for their classes while they are out. In fact, I asked that all teachers at my school be required to attend as part of my son's IEP and that didn't happen. Alternatively, I requested that RISD provide training to all teachers and other personnel at our school that would have any interaction with him. They sent a district autism program representative to the campus a few times the first month after that ARD meeting, and that was the extent of it. My son's IEP is never consistently met. The most feedback I get from the school this year is how he is failing the requirements of the modified TAAKS test.

My son is a hand-flapper. If it's too loud in the room, he goes on sensory overload and will often flap. If it gets too quiet, he claps his hands loudly and startles the teacher. He constantly self-talks (this sounds like back-talk being muttered under his breath, but it's audible and is usually not very nice). He doesn't realize that he's talking out loud-he thinks it is the "thinking words" that his private autism therapist (also not provided by the district) said were ok to think, but not to say. He also is usually only responsive or conversational about topics that he is focused on, which I guarantee are not usually what is being asked or on topic with assignments. These are just a few of the things that [REDACTED] does that the other children don't do, which are not only reportedly distracting, but the teachers – including the resource teachers – are not trained to handle and do not understand. To make matters more difficult, he is learning-disabled and qualifies for resource for speech, reading, and math. The kicker is that his IQ is within normal range and he doesn't physically "appear" to have anything wrong with him (except for the hand-flapping), so it is a constant battle for me and for him because most often the side-effects of his autism are perceived as behavior problems and they are not. They are, for the most part, directly related to his lack of social skills and inability to filter in social situations. Please keep in mind that the average school day is nothing but an eight-hour long experience in social skills. It is a day-long emotional and frustrating mine field for my son, every hour of every day.

Change and transition are very difficult for [REDACTED]. In the Fall of 2008, [REDACTED] will face going from this small elementary school where he at least knows most of the people and the building he has known for 8 years. He will be going from very few classroom changes that coincide with only one other class of 20 kids and with no need to go to a locker, change textbooks, etc....to a middle school that will change classes for each subject (about 7 or 8 times a day, not counting recess, lunch, music, art, etc...) and wherein the class changes for the entire school of almost 1000 are in the hallways at the same time. He will be merging the classmates from his school with those of several other elementary schools, which will pose a change and transition event for him that may just put us back several years in terms of some small steps we finally conquered at the elementary level. When asked by the school district how they plan to help address this situation, the response was that my child could get out of class early, go to his locker to put things away

Senate Testimony- [REDACTED]

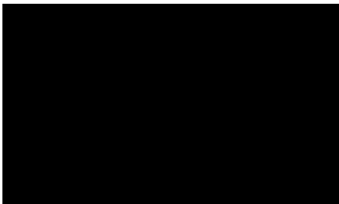
and get other things for the next class, and have those few minutes to figure it out. My son is 12. He is not able to pick out his own clothes without specific and limited instructions on what to do and when to do it. RISD reportedly does not have the funds to provide even an aide to assist him with what will certainly be an insurmountable task if left to his own devices.

■■■■ hits his head and says he hates his "stupid brain". He knows that he is not like the other kids in his school. Due to the community resources I have been able to find for him, he is just now realizing that there are more kids out there with autism spectrum disorders....finally realizing that he's not the only one, which at least helps some with his self-esteem.

Senators, please close your eyes and imagine your child. Imagine that your child is 12. Now, subtract 4 or 5 years....your 12 year old is emotionally and developmentally around 8 years old. One year from now your then 9 year old will be left to his or her own devices in a huge middle school. I know many "normal" teenagers that have tremendous struggles with the transition to middle school, as they are navigating many other physical, social, and emotional changes at the same time. My 13 year old will actually be a 9 year old trapped in an older body....scared, confused, and frustrated.

There are private schools in Dallas that specialize in teaching children with autism spectrum disorders. They educate the whole child, with the academic requirements being the foundation, and the special ongoing and intensive emotional and social skills training that will be key to assisting him become a productive and capable tax-paying member of our community. I still don't know what I will decide for him when it's time for middle school. What I do know is that my school district is not now and will likely not be in a year, equipped to provide the learning environment that will help my son thrive. The tuition at these private schools is prohibitive to me and most parents that I know. All I am asking....no – pleading – for is for you to give me the choice, as his Mom, to have the option to provide him with the educational environment that will best address his needs.

Respectfully Submitted,



This is ■■■■ **You have the power** to make a huge difference in his life next year. He's not a lobbyist or a representative of a major political faction. He is a little boy that needs your help now. Please make the right decision for ■■■■ and for the many, many other children like him.

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support Senate Bill 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

I am sure that my story is not unique. I have an 8 year old with autism. He is severely affected. I have spent over \$150,000 education my son privately. I put him in a public education program in Houston Independent School District last year. The primary issues I have had are:

Chevy vs. Cadillac.

Teachers specifically trained in teaching students with autism are in extremely short supply within the school district and when such an individual is hired, in my experience, they are not given appropriate resources to effectively educate children with autism. Primarily, HISD is against 1:1 instruction. The special education coordinator specifically told me that she does not want an aide tied to a student because the student can become dependent upon the aide. It is easy to rationalize the district's perspective; their rationalization always saves them money. The major topic at my recent ARD was that my son needed a 1:1 aide. This recommendation was supported by three psychologists. One of these psychologists worked for the school district and her report regarding my son indicated that my son needed to be educated 1:1. None the less, my son did not receive an aide. I was told that Texas provides a Chevy education and not a Cadillac. Texas does not require that a pupil's abilities are maximized. I taped this meeting and would be happy to share this tape with anyone interested in reviewing it.

Services to be offered are pre-determined by the District prior to the meeting and the information provided at these meetings by district

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

I am a parent of a child diagnosed with High Functioning Autism. And, I would like to applaud you on your efforts to create an ASAP program for more than 17,000 autistic children under legislation. Education groups will argue that the plan would divert millions of tax dollars to private schools. However, I believe that Teachers will be more motivated to provide school services to Autistic children with the State and Federal Funds they receive.

As a parent of a student with Autism, I can testify that it is not easy to advocate for these students. The Schools fight to give minimal services to these children—regardless, of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. My Son was in the public school system from the age of 3 up to 6. Every meeting through the ARD (Admissions, Review and Dismissal Process) was stressful and combative. Services recommended by the Developmental Pediatrician to increase my child's academic success were turned down every single year.

Through unannounced school visits, I saw how my Son and other Special Needs Children were neglected. Many times, I came by the school around 8 am to find my Son playing with pegs—while the neurotypical children worked on their lesson plans. The ARD agreed schedule was not followed—I found my Son in the hallway, running around at different times of the day. Eventually, my Son was the victim of bullying from the Staff and other Students. I eventually withdrew him from school when he suffered of a pencil stab on his hand.

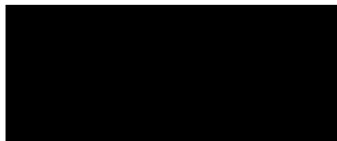
My Son is attending a private school for children with Autism. He is very vocal and cheerful now. He looks forward to attending his school and he is no longer being victimized or bullied. His cognitive and expressive skills are flourishing because he is not in a life-threatening environment any longer.

I am a Pharmacist in San Antonio and supervise personnel; and, as a Supervisor, I hold my Staff accountable to carry out their job descriptions. I cannot understand why the School Administrators—including the School Principal—did not question her Staff ever when I would bring up my concerns to her.

If the public School provided the services all Autistic children need to become academically successful, these students would remain in their assigned public school. The public schools are often much closer than the private schools and therefore more convenient (plus, less costly—for example, my Son's monthly tuition is \$1100.00). Currently, legislation dictates that if a free and appropriate public education cannot be provided then the School must send the Student to a place that can provide the services and pay. Although, there are laws to protect children with disabilities there is a lot of room for interpretation and the burden of proof falls on the parents.

The number of Autistic children is growing and there needs to be standards in place to invest in these children's education early on when it has been proven scientifically to be the best time--thereby, increasing their chances for a successful future. These children will soon be Adults with Autism. Therefore, I support SB 1000 for Autistic students to increase their probabilities of receiving all the services they need to succeed academically and eventually in life.

Thank you,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

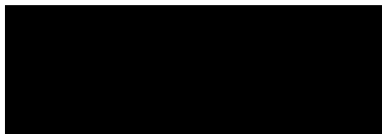
Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 wholeheartedly!! Children need a lot of services when they are young and most likely to benefit the most from them, but also continue to need appropriate services throughout their educational careers. Families need these services throughout the child's educational years, from preschool to high school and vocational training! I fought every step of the way, but my autistic son did receive decent services in Texas from Kinder to 5th grade. When he entered middle school, despite preparing him for the transition, the school's "program" was so horrible that my son regressed behaviorally 3 years in 3 weeks time. A year and a half later, he still has not fully regained his behavior to the level it was at before the middle school disaster, and the stress it has caused me as his parent and advocate has resulted in permanent physical and mental health problems that I struggle with daily. Autism is not just a serious issue for the individuals and families affected; indeed, it is a long-term social issue on many levels. It affects all children who are around individuals with ASD, in public and private schools, stores, churches, playgrounds, sports teams, and all other public venues. Adults don't know how to react to persons with ASD, so they are at a loss when it comes to teaching their children how to react. Millions of tax dollars annually are spent on persons with ASD in public school and vocational programs, Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, and institutions/state schools, to name a few. Parents of individuals with ASD are frequently so busy with the necessities of their child that they cannot be part of the work force, and frequently are so stressed that they suffer health problems themselves. Right now, today, the United States has literally millions of persons with ASD, as well as their parents, who are intelligent and capable people -- but are being prevented from not only reaching their own potential, but prevented from being contributing members of society. Persons with ASD need education and therapy, yes, but they also need jobs and a fulfilling social/recreational life, as well as places to worship. Parents need a lot more understanding and help in this lifelong fight -- a fight for their child to have a decent life, just like any other citizen of this country. Persons with ASD also need medical, dental, and life insurance, which can be extremely difficult to impossible to obtain and/or pay for. If every child ever born needed as much care as an autistic child, the human race

either fatal or contagious, the government (as well as pharmaceutical companies) would have already poured billions of dollars into research and treatment, and would have done so more than two decades ago. The reason autism has been dismissed for so long is because it was viewed as a psychological problem, most notably caused by bad parenting, and was mostly thought of as a behavioral problem, not a legitimate medical (bio-neurological) problem. Why is it that a previously "typical" person can suffer a traumatic brain injury, and his symptoms are taken seriously, but a person born with a brain difference (such as ASD) is just dismissed as worthless and "should be put away" in an institution?!

I stand up not only for my child, but for ALL individuals and families affected by ASD. This is lifelong, and is at epidemic proportions. Action needs to be taken now, and needs to continue until this country has figured out a way to either prevent, cure, or successfully integrate into society persons with ASD.

Sincerely,



Testimony in support of SB 1000 Texas Autism Scholarships

By Leah [REDACTED]

March 26, 2007

My name is [REDACTED] I am the mother of a six-year-old boy who has High Functioning Autism.

I am in full support of SP 1000, the bill for Autism Scholarships in Texas.

My son has Asperger Syndrome, found on the autism spectrum. He is very bright but has difficulties with the sensory, social / communicative and behavioral issues that this "invisible" disability brings with it.

My child does not learn like other, neuro-typical children, nor does he exhibit what many call "appropriate behavior" much of the time. It is natural to place the blame for that somewhere since he looks so "normal" and because he is intelligent. In the public school, due to a lack of training and experience, some educators erroneously think this is due to something the parents do or do not do and the child's behavior is somehow the parents' fault. It's not only educators who are mistaken. Neighbors, family members, and even pediatricians, not to mention the public at large, often misjudge parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. But the very people to whom we entrust our children: educators and those working closely with them - should be able to overcome their ignorance about autism and learn how to work with and support those who have it. This has not happened to the degree it needs to in order for autistic children to receive a free and appropriate education in most public schools in the state of Texas, and that is unacceptable. Even worse, there are a plethora of individuals working within the Texas public school system that claim to be educated and equipped to teach our children, when all they have had is a half-day or even one full day training session. Again, this is unacceptable.

What I hope you can understand is that parenting and educating our special needs son means that my husband and I live under significant stress on a daily basis. Much of the physical, emotional, and financial stress we are under is because the school system, as it exists and functions today, is not properly equipped to educate or support our son. The stress coupled with fear for his future would be greatly lessened if a more responsible and acceptable educational choice for our son existed. We have spent what little savings we had, closed a successful minority-owned business, and relocated away from a home and community we dearly loved in order for our son to be educated in a manner that is positive and works for him. We make sacrifices readily and heartily for our son. We are grateful to have him in our lives and are not sorry for or embarrassed by his condition, nor are we disheartened by the energy and effort devoted to him. However, the current education offered to US taxpayers with autistic children causes a great deal of extra work and effort on the part of parents. This is added stress that people of average means often buckle under.

I could not attend the hearing on SB 1000 today, because leaving our son with caregivers or taking him with us from the DFW area to Austin during the week would pose such significant problems for him, that we decided we must do what is best for him, and once again, put our own interests and needs aside. Most families can load up their vehicles and take off with little thought of the consequences to their child. We do not have that luxury. To change our son's schedule is very stressful for him, sets him off and causes days if not weeks of negative consequences for all of us.

To give a bit of background: In 1997, my husband, a veteran of the Gulf War and a plank owner of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, successfully completed 10 years of service in the US Navy. We settled in Austin, Texas and although we could not afford much, began to make our dream of becoming first-time homeowners a reality. We longed to live in the central Austin area where our future children could walk or cycle to school and where we could put down roots in a well established, culturally and ethnically mixed neighborhood. We purchased a small, run down rental property, rolled up our sleeves and went to work restoring it. We completely gutted and rehabbed the existing structure and enlarged the house by adding on new construction. We did everything allowed by law ourselves using as much rehabbed materials as we could get from salvage yards and reuse centers. We worked diligently for the next several years to turn the 1940 bungalow into our dream home. We worked hard on the yard, and garden as well, added beautiful one-of-a-kind iron fencing, a redwood deck, and more. The only way we could possibly afford to live in central Austin

was by sweat equity. We did every bit of ourselves from the foundation up. It was a labor of love. We were so proud of our accomplishment.

We became deeply rooted in the community. My husband was instrumental in founding the East Austin Republicans and I started a successful small business. We became very involved in a local church and in the neighborhood in general. As an ex-professional opera singer, I sang at various institutions in and around Austin, gave music seminars and created and ran Leah's Music Class, music and movement for preschoolers and their parents and teachers. After years of being moved and stationed in various areas with his military service and my operatic career, it was great to know we had finally arrived at the place where we would raise our children and grow old together. Thanks to the lack of educational opportunities for our son, that did not happen.

In 2000, our son was born in Austin. At the age of four he was diagnosed with Sensory Integration Dysfunction and at age five with High Functioning Autism / Asperger Syndrome and speech/language problems.

Due to his disability, our son required (and still does) very strict routines and schedules and a great amount of one-on-one attention.

We were told by our pediatrician that our son needed to "socialize" with other children (despite the fact that he was taken to plenty of playgroups and outings with other children), so at age three, he attended a Mother's Day Out preschool program. At age four, we tried both a program at a local recreation center and a part time stint in a traditional day school. From there, he moved on to kindergarten in Austin ISD. None of these institutions could handle or educate our son. The preschools did not have trained staff who could deal with him. He was physically injured at the ripe old age of three at a highly accredited Mother's Day Out program. At age four, he attended a very sought after preschool that fed into a prominent private elementary and middle school where he was dismissed because he could not fit in, follow the "rules", or cope with noise or transitions. At the recreation center, he could not assimilate because it was a social play program and he was unable to play with or socialize with other children. Due to his disability, we were more or less forced to enter him into public school for kindergarten, since we could not afford the tuition at special programs or schools that were specifically for autistic children. ██████████ attended school for a gut wrenching kindergarten year where he was physically and emotionally harmed. We had no less than eight ARD's and multiple meetings with school staff whose response to our son's autistic behavior was to put him in "shut down" rather than teach him appropriate social and behavioral skills. He was not educated and he was not safe. We were not allowed to transfer him to another school within the district and we could no longer allow him to remain in an uncontrolled and unstable environment.

The principal at Maplewood Elementary School, where our son attended kindergarten, blatantly told me "I realize you feel you must advocate for your son, but I must protect my teachers and advocate for **them**". He also set up a meeting where unbeknownst to me, I would face no less than six AISD staff across the table from me - alone - where he said "frankly Mrs. ██████████, I cringe when I see you coming down the hallway because nothing is ever good enough for you". My son was not learning to read or write, he was not included in group activities, and he was not safe at school (he was molested by another student at the school in the bathroom when no one noticed he was missing for a 20 minute period of time during lunch when his IEP called for an aide to be with him). Due to the lack of knowledge and ability (and caring on the part of some staff I might add), our son's self-esteem and behavior plummeted to the point where he had to see a behavioral psychologist twice a week. This was in addition to the out-of-pocket expenses we already incurred for Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy and other programs we paid for separately (in addition to the taxes we also paid for the public school) because he got none of these through the school district.

As I mentioned, we were forced to close my growing business and leave the home we had worked so hard to build. We had to walk away from our church and community and move to an area where our son could be more properly educated. I had to become a full time advocate for our son and get his educational and therapeutic needs met outside of the school setting. We have exhausted what little savings we had and are barely making ends meet financially due to the money we have been forced to spend on the early

interventions proven to work with high functioning autistic children. This is in addition to paying our taxes – the salaries of those in the public school system who denied our son a “free” and appropriate education. This is not because our son is more special than any other child or because we feel he deserves more than others. This is simply for our son our son to have a fighting chance to develop into a decent able-bodied and able-minded citizen. We have paid for doctors, therapies, social programs, educational materials, sensory equipment, and more entirely out of pocket because our insurance covers none of what our child so desperately needs to educate him and help him to cope with, live with and hopefully, overcome his disability.

It is my strong belief that my tax dollars should go to educate my child. My husband and I have both worked and paid taxes since we were 16 years old and we are now 50 and 44 years old, respectively. How much of our public tax dollars have gone into football and cheerleading programs or other programs that don't educate our child or anyone like him? Our tax dollars should be used to educate ALL the children in the public schools. These are CHILDREN we are talking about! Money and leisure activities are not more important than children and their education!

Educating autistic students is challenging. It requires specialized techniques and strategies to work with the children, which requires a great deal of staff training. It also requires a lot of training, education, time, money and patience on the part of parents too but we figure a way to get it done because we have to. We are parents who are PAYING for the school system, just like those who have neuro-typical children. We were not told, “pay your taxes and your NORMAL child will be sent to school with those dollars”. A child is a child. It does not matter how much time, money or energy it takes to get it done. It MUST be done by law. We are told that by law, the public schools will properly educate, not harm, our children. We have paid and are paying for it. Cut cheerleading, cut football, cut those programs that do not teach a child to FUNCTION and SURVIVE in the world around them but don't cut any child's education. It is called a “free and appropriate **education**” for a reason.

As for legislators and others who oppose autism scholarships: State Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio, has been quoted as opposing school vouchers but “agonizes with parents who doubt that an assigned public school maximizes their autistic child's learning potential.”

Maximizes learning potential? How about just not wrecking the child's nervous system, self esteem and robbing him or her of every drop of their dignity by placing them in schools with teachers and staff who have no idea how to handle these children much less educate them?! And to say she “AGONIZES with parents”... how can that be? If she were in AGONY over it, why wouldn't she vote in a way that would end that AGONY?

As for parents using private schools: A parent was quoted as saying: “It's not cheap, but it's the best place for my child.”

Lucky for them that they have the money to go the private route! We were extremely fortunate and blessed to be able to pull up stakes and relocate to a school in Plano, TX where our son is getting a better education. My husband and I BELIEVE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLING. We both attended and graduated from public schools. But all but a very small handful of schools in Texas are able to handle autistic children and these children's lives are literally going to be wasted. Without early intervention, autistic children can kiss a decent future goodbye.

And what of families who cannot afford to do what we have managed to do? What of folks who have no choice but to put their kids in their local public school and they must fight tooth and nail while the schools hire special education attorneys to ensure that IDEA laws are danced around so that children are not educated properly?

As for educators feeling conflicted: An educator said: “Parents are spending their college savings. They are spending everything they have to give their child a chance. That's the part that's really sad.”

To that I must say what about the parents who don't have these options? College savings?? Are you joking? We are barely getting the bills paid every month!

could get our hands on to make it happen. I had a business that was flourishing in Austin. It was growing. It was helping people. It was becoming very successful. And, it was in the black, which is saying something because I started my business with no financial support ... with no backing of any kind. I started with a couple hundred bucks I saved and poured every cent I made back into the business. I did my own pavement pounding, my own marketing, my own everything. I worked myself half to death to build something good and had to give it up because the public schools could not educate my child or even keep him safe. We are talking about a very smart, high functioning child. Not only could they not educate him but they were causing additional problems with constant change, chaos, and plans for great things that never came about. We quickly saw that the school system there was using our child as a proving ground, a guinea pig, and we saw that we can't go back and do do-overs of his early formative educational years. We don't get the years back. We can't undo the damage.

I see others around me with college savings, great careers, flourishing businesses and I'm mad. I'm downright jealous. They are moving forward and they keep wondering and asking why I put the brakes on - why I "threw it all away", and asking when I'm going to get things going again business wise... career wise. They don't understand that they can function in a way in their families that we can't in ours. They don't get it that they can start and run their own businesses with two or three kids in the house, because their kids can play with others or on their own with ease, go to school with ease, go on play dates and stay with babysitters and watch as much TV as they care to and go to sleep and bathe and follow simple directions and so on, and so on. Their children don't require special food, special schedules, special teaching tools, special books, special teachers or never ending sessions where they are having to train their school to educate their child.

As previously mentioned, we don't have insurance that covers ANY of the therapies for our son. We don't have ANY savings. We bought an old house with old systems and termites galore and have been up to our armpits redoing it ourselves so our child could attend the ONE public school we could find in Texas with what is essentially a contained classroom for high functioning autistic kids. Our patience is about gone. Our health is close behind. And you can no doubt see that my sense of humor is long gone, from the ranting in this letter.

There are great people here in Plano and the DFW area and great programs here. The Autism support and Asperger's support network of parents here are AWESOME. The school our son attends is working with what they have to do the best they can for our son. But there has been immense stress and trials involved in getting our child into a school that can meet him where he is. I feel awful for families who can't do what we are doing. And we have just barely been able to make it happen.

My husband will be taking on an additional job soon and I won't be starting my business back up as soon as I'd hoped, but we'll get over it. At the ages of 50 and 44 we are taking care of today and trying not to worry about tomorrow. Not where we thought we'd be. Not where we worked so hard to get.

If autism scholarships were an option, things would've been a lot better for us and I know they would be for people who don't have the financial options we have. The school we relocated here for could change course

[REDACTED]

March 26,2007

I am writing in order to tell the story of our experiences in finding appropriate education for my autistic son, [REDACTED] in Texas public schools

We moved to Murphy, Texas in December of 2003. I had researched the schools here as well as I thought I could. We bought our house in Murphy because the principal at Boggess Elementary, the only elementary school in Murphy at that time, had said they had some experience with children who have asperger syndrome. My son, [REDACTED], has Asperger Syndrome. He was nearing his sixth birthday when we moved.

Prior to our move we lived in Hanover, Maryland. [REDACTED] attended Elkridge Elementary School in the Howard County district. He was spending most of his time in a general education setting and succeeding. [REDACTED] often struggled with social situations, however, due to the efforts of school staff and the great working relationship I had with them we were able to prevent major problems. [REDACTED] had friends and was making excellent academic progress. We were very happy with the services [REDACTED] received.

Then we moved to Murphy. [REDACTED] began attending Boggess Elementary School in January of 2004. He was in first grade. For the first two weeks of school [REDACTED] had an aide with him at all times. This worked well and he seemed to be tolerating the new school. After two weeks we had an ARD. During this ARD the staff at Boggess told me [REDACTED] was doing very well and that he no longer needed an aide. I didn't know much about the ARD process here in Texas and had come from a place where developing IEPs was easy. I thought the school staff must know what they were doing so I signed the IEP.

This is when [REDACTED] began experiencing difficulties. I didn't know about it for several weeks. I was told, [REDACTED] is doing fine." Eventually, however, I started receiving phone calls. [REDACTED] was having meltdowns. I tried to visit the school to observe [REDACTED] in the classroom. I was not allowed more than a few minutes and was hurried out. I felt the school was keeping things from me, they didn't want to talk to me and didn't want me coming into the school. I thought it might help to volunteer at the school. I wanted to improve our working relationship. I couldn't get anyone to tell me how I could apply to volunteer at the school. In Maryland people just volunteered and there was no background check procedure as there is in Texas. I would have been happy to go through the background check but nobody would tell me anything about volunteering.

[REDACTED] behavior at home began to deteriorate. He began biting again which was a behavior that had stopped long before. I couldn't take him to the park for fear of him hitting and biting other children. [REDACTED] was depressed, anxious and angry. He thought of himself as "the bad kid". I continued trying to work with the school.

In February, the day before [REDACTED] 6th birthday, we were called to be notified of an incident involving [REDACTED] in which he pushed his chair into his teacher's legs. This was considered an act of violence and under the no tolerance policy [REDACTED] was being sent to Special Programs. My understanding is that Special Programs is the "behavior" school.

PE. As far as I understand it, nobody examined him when he said his foot hurt. He had a plantar wart on his foot that was causing him a lot of pain. It became apparent to me very quickly that this was not the right place for [REDACTED]. He needed people who understood that he couldn't always communicate his need to use the bathroom. He needed people who would encourage him to communicate when he could and pay attention when he said he was feeling pain.

After 2 days at Special Programs my husband and I contacted Boggess Elementary telling them that we felt the placement was inappropriate. They took [REDACTED] back and brought in a special ed instructor whom they said was a crisis specialist. She was actually wonderful with [REDACTED] and very willing to work with me when I had questions or suggestions. This was discouraged by the Special Ed team leader at Boggess.

Over the next few months the special ed team leader yelled at me for trying to speak to the crisis intervention person; told me [REDACTED] problems were due to my bad parenting. She said that [REDACTED] behavior was better at home than at school because "You don't make him do anything."

During one visit to Boggess I observed my son's behavior and the staff working with him. He actually was doing well that day and earned the privilege of being "line leader". Then another child pushed [REDACTED] responded by saying, "Don't push me." I felt this was an appropriate way for him to respond. The teacher said, [REDACTED] no talking in line."

It was obvious to me that they really didn't understand asperger syndrome. When [REDACTED] would act out verbally the teachers would become angry. The special ed team leader told me "He called me a liar, I take that very seriously." Calling adults liars is very much a part of [REDACTED] disability. When he's upset he acts out verbally. He also has a skewed perspective of what is happening around him so probably really did believe the teacher was lying. He also didn't have the social skills at that time to know that calling a teacher a liar was not the best way to handle the situation.

The best way to handle [REDACTED] verbal behavior is to ignore the inappropriate things he says and to encourage him and reward him when he is appropriate. Overreacting to [REDACTED] angry outbursts only increases that behavior. So [REDACTED] behavior continued to deteriorate. Meanwhile the stress levels at home continued to rise.

I would like to state here that I believe the staff at Boggess Elementary did the best they could with what they had. They weren't trained to deal with [REDACTED]. The special ed team leader had been to a conference on Asperger Syndrome, but had had no further training. She took a behavioral approach to everything and thus punished [REDACTED] by taking away recess and specials. The general education teacher did not have enough support. I remember the special ed team leader telling her, "I can't be here all the time." The school was overcrowded and there were three special needs kids in [REDACTED] class and the special ed team leader felt she shouldn't have to spend so much time helping this teacher.

Eventually we were offered another option. We were told that a new classroom was opening at Harrington Elementary. We were nervous because we'd seen how things were at Special Programs but then we were shown a video of the teacher in the middle of teaching a similar class in another school. I had a very good feeling that this was exactly what [REDACTED] needed. So we signed a new IEP and [REDACTED] started second grade at Harrington. At Harrington [REDACTED] was given everything I'd requested at Boggess and then some. They teach me new things all the time and they also consult me. We are truly a team. [REDACTED] behavior has improved to the point that he spends most of his time in general education now. He is having a great deal of success. He has won the Principal's Award for Good Citizenship, received a commended score on the math TAKS and his behavior has improved dramatically. He writes poetry and last year received an award for some of his artwork. One drawing he did was included in Plano's Youth Art Month Celebration. [REDACTED] is thriving and happy.

good services, however there is only one classroom in the whole district for kids who are high functioning. 1 in 150 kids have some sort of autism spectrum disorder. Many of these children are high functioning. I am sure there are children in Plano who are not getting their needs met. Some parents have taken their children out of PISD and due to cost or an inability to find an appropriate private school they are homeschooling.

I am very concerned about what will happen to my child when it comes time for him to go to middle school. I don't know of any classrooms for middle school and high school children.

One reason we chose to move to Murphy is that it was in the Plano School District. We had heard it was the best in the area. I do feel that PISD is attempting to improve but they have a long way to go and there are children in inappropriate and inadequate educational settings who are in critical periods of development who will children who are not receiving appropriate services are deteriorating.

It is not just a personal issue for individuals and families. Autism affects all of us. Children who do not get the help they need when they need it will fail to reach their potential. They will fail to gain the skills they need in order to care for themselves as adults. Many autistic people are highly intelligent, some, the ones who get the support they need, can go to college, have careers, get married and become parents. The ones who do not get their needs met will inevitably require a lot more support as adults than those who get what they need early in life. Who will care for them when their parents are no longer able?

I am not against the public school system. We have had some wonderful experiences with public schools. But for people whose children have autism, there need to be other options. The public schools are not meeting the needs of all autistic children. My family is very fortunate to have what we have. [REDACTED] is in an excellent program and has made tremendous progress in meeting his educational and social skill goals. I don't understand why so few children get what he gets but I do know that the difference will be made up in some way. Either parents will homeschool or find private schools or the state will need to provide services when these children become adults. The less we provide for them as children the more they will require as adults.

[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

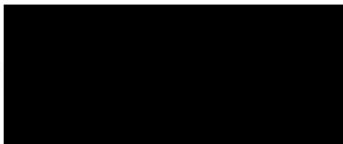
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

Although all my children are grown, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. It is my opinion that these children deserve the same opportunity for advancement as any mainstream student, regardless of what it may require.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

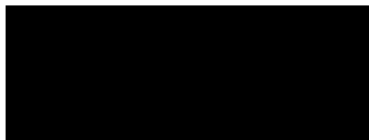
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P.O. Box 12068
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I am sure that my story is not unique. I have an 8 year old with autism. He is severely affected. I have spent over \$150,000 education my son privately. I put him in a public education program in Houston Independent School District last year. The primary issues I have had are:

Chevy vs. Cadillac.

Teachers specifically trained in teaching students with autism are in extremely short supply within the school district and when such an individual is hired, in my experience, they are not given appropriate resources to effectively educate children with autism. Primarily, HISD is against 1:1 instruction. The special education coordinator specifically told me that she does not want an aide tied to a student because the student can become dependent upon the aide. It is easy to rationalize the district's perspective; their rationalization always saves them money. The major topic at my recent ARD was that my son needed a 1:1 aide. This recommendation was supported by three psychologists. One of these psychologists worked for the school district and her report regarding my son indicated that my son needed to be educated 1:1. None the less, my son did not receive an aide. I was told that Texas provides a Chevy education and not a Cadillac. Texas does not require that a pupil's abilities are maximized. I taped this meeting and would be happy to share this tape with anyone interested in reviewing it.

Services to be offered are pre-determined by the District prior to the meeting and the information provided at these meetings by district personnel merely support the prior determinations.

* Last year, during the ARD regarding the evaluation performed by the school psychologist, there was a discussion that we should make

sure the recommendation requires 1:1 instruction for Colin and that it be written that in a way so that a later interpretation that the 1:1 instruction would not be only for new information being taught. However, during this year's ARD, the psychologist changed her entire demeanor and interpretation to say that she wrote this and meant he needed to be instructed 1:1 for new information only. I know she was forced to go back on her word and this shows me that these meetings are planned with an end objective.

* During the ARD regarding the 1:1 Aide, there was a discussion about whether my son was a flight risk (he runs away some times). I was assured that he was no longer a flight risk. I went to the classroom a week later, and while I was talking to the teacher, my son ran out the door of the temporary classroom. An aide had to run after him.

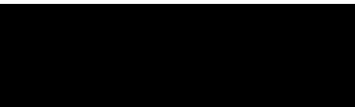
Basically, the ARDs are set up to document the information that the district feels is necessary to implement their recommendations. To believe that the parents have a say so in what happens is naïve.

About 90% of Due Process Hearings are won by the Districts

The odds of winning at a due process hearing are overwhelming in favor of the districts. I reviewed some hearing opinions to get a flavor of what is going on. The hearing officers, in my opinion, appeared to go out of their way, to find testimony by the school district employees credible and testimony by representatives of the parents as not credible. Hearing officers are appointed by the TEA. The appointment and recruitment of hearing officers needs to be reviewed so that objective hearing officers hold these positions. It is clear from the 90% win rate by the school districts, that there is a bias among the hearing officers.

I pay annual property taxes and federal taxes. I believe that I should have a say in how these monies are spent on my child's education. I believe an autism education scholarship would aide Texas in appropriately educating my son.

Regards,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

I have a son who was diagnosed with Autism at age 3. Like any parent, I want my son to have the opportunity to receive a great education.

My son tries so hard to learn as much as he can. However, he gets frustrated because he is trying so hard to learn, but his present public school is not capable of effectively meeting his educational needs. As parents, it is equally frustrating for my husband and me, that we do not have the funds to place our son in the appropriate educational setting. The cost for providing appropriate education for an autistic child is out of reach for most affected families. We truly need the state to believe in our children and to know that with the proper education in place, they too will be able to grow up and contribute positively to our society.

Therefore, I implore the committee to please give my son and the autistic children of the state of Texas a fighting chance to have a meaningful, happy, productive, and successful life. I implore the committee to PLEASE put an end to the wasting of such valuable lives, by ending this educational atrocity affecting our autistic children in the state of Texas, by passing the Texas Senate Bill 1000, the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Thank you.



March 27, 2007

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Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
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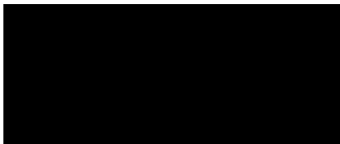
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Over the last 18 years, I have witnessed my close friend's family struggle with the challenges of having an autistic member of their family. They have not been fortunate in finding education programs that suited him and he was always put into classrooms with other "special kids" that did not share the same challenges he did. Putting him into those classroom environments did not address his specific needs and cater to autistic people. Autism is often misunderstood. People struggling with this should receive education catered to their needs to allow them growth, learning, and progression. I strongly feel that if there was an Autism Service available to him, that it would have helped him grow much more than he has. I hope to see progression in the education and service accessibility for people and families struggling with autism.

Thank you for making a difference.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

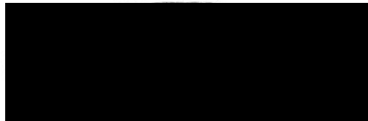
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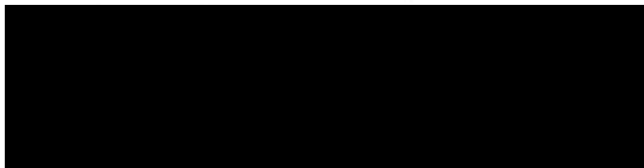
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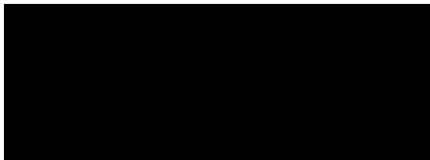
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. We have a great need in the state of Texas for better and more resources to educate and aid individuals with autism.

Sincerely,



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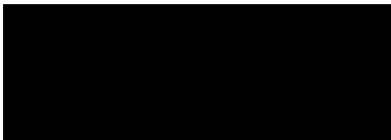
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Please do all that you can to support and pass this important piece of legislation to benefit our children of Texas.

Sincerely,



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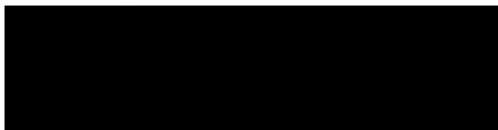
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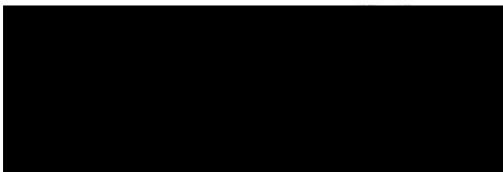
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March 27, 2007

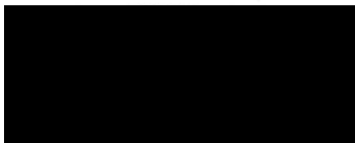
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

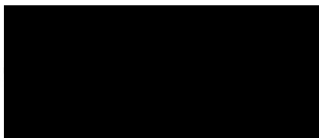
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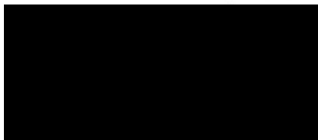
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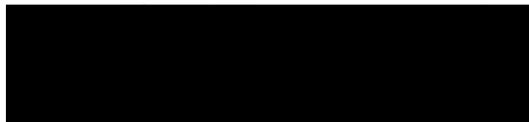
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As mother to a 12-year old son with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

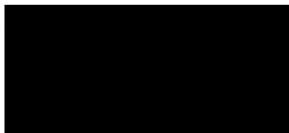
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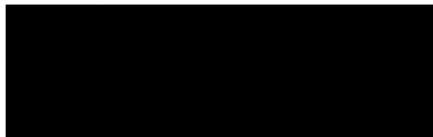
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Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

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Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

This is an essential piece of legislation whose time has come. So, without any delay, Legislators should recognize the overwhelming value of this and get it done NOW.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

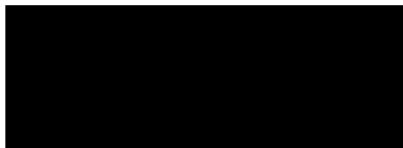
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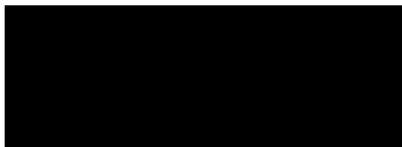
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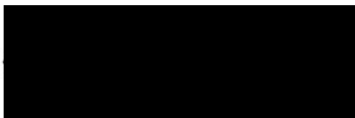
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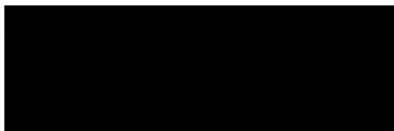
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a parent of a child with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

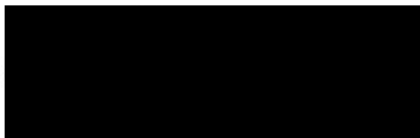
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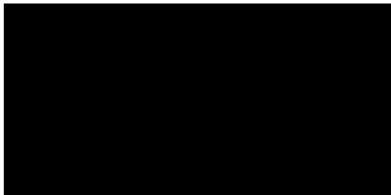
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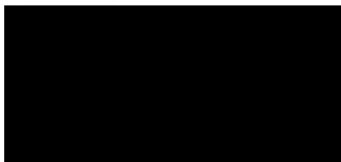
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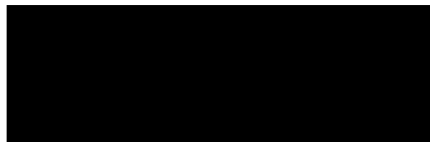
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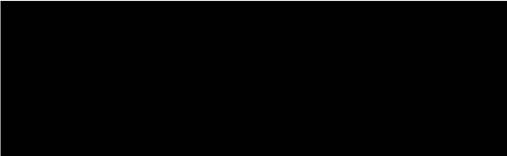
March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

We support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. We have an eight year old son, [REDACTED] who is on the Autism Spectrum. The public school system is ill-equipped to properly educate our child. An ASAP is a step in the right direction.



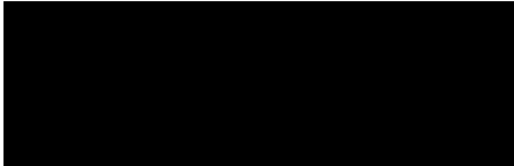
March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As parents of two autistic children enrolled in public education in San Antonio Texas, we strongly support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I wanted to voice my own experience of growing up with my autistic brother, [REDACTED]

When my brother first started attending school, I understood the importance of him learning how to write his name and even learning how to color within the lines of coloring books. However, it greatly disappointed me to see him have to do this exact same work, even throughout his high school years. He'll turn 22 this July and I still see him bring home handouts where he has to trace his name, as if that's the full extent of his abilities.

Although he's a non-verbal autistic, one can see his intelligence through his actions and his increasing responsibility I see in him through the years. I have seen him, in recent years, learn to repeat words that people speak to him (this after his not talking for 18 years), eat a healthy diet (on his own accord and after he only ate junk food most of his life) and go up to people and show them affection (this is a very hard thing for autistic people to do) Although all of this seems like quite normal things for any teenager or young adult to do, I find that it shows he is able to move forward in life and that he wants to make a better life for himself. Although he might be too old to take advantage of the scholarship provided by senate bill 1000, I want this opportunity available to other children in his same situation.

Thank you so much for making this opportunity possible and I hope Senate Bill 1000 passes.

[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

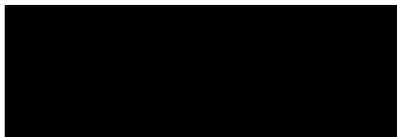
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March 27, 2007

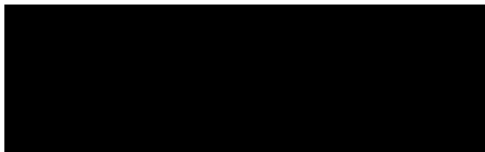
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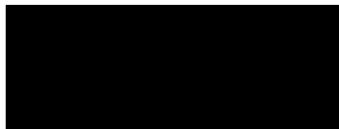
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March 27, 2007

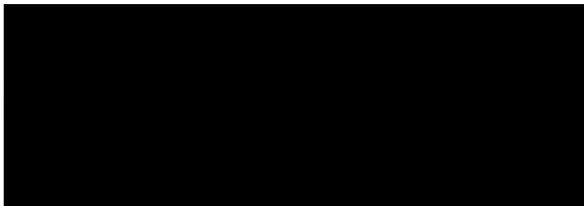
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P.O. Box 12068
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Sincerely,



MARCH 27, 2007

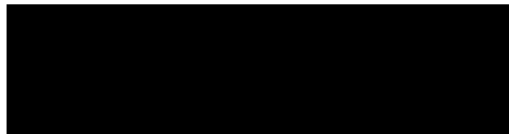
HONORABLE FLORENCE SHAPIRO
CHAIR, SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
P.O. BOX 12068
CAPITOL STATION
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

RE: WRITTEN SUPPORT FOR SB 1000 – PUBLIC HEARING

DEAR SENATOR SHAPIRO:

I SUPPORT SB 1000 TO CREATE AN AUTISM SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAM IN TEXAS.

SINCERELY,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

March 27, 2007

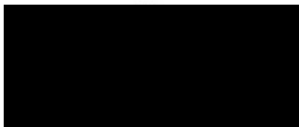
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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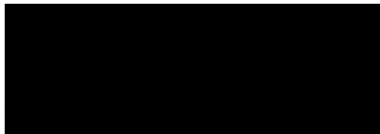
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Heari

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a parent to two children with autism, I support
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Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

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P.O. Box 12068
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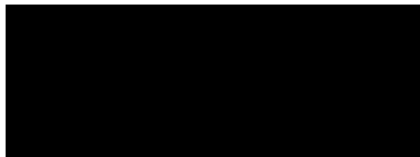
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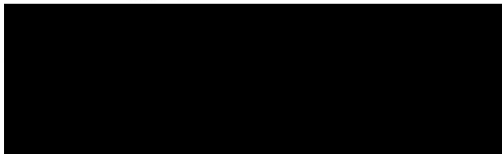
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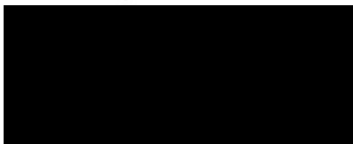
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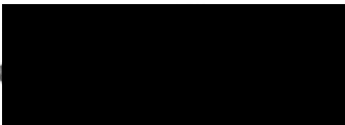
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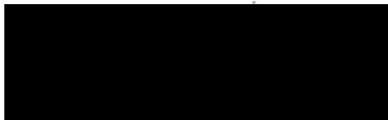
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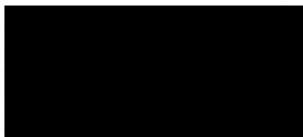
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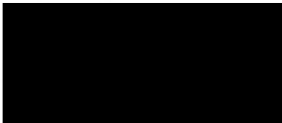
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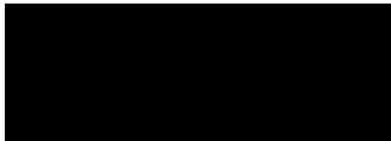
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March 27, 2007

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P.O. Box 12068
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Autism is reaching epidemic proportions. While great minds across the world continue to research the cause and cure of autism, Texas must meet the educational needs of its children with autism today. One thing we know for sure: All children with autism can learn and make significant educational progress if placed in an appropriate setting to meet their individual needs. Senate Bill 1000 will allow families the flexibility to find a public school or accredited private school to meet the educational needs of their children with autism.

Thank you for your time and hard work to improve education for children with autism in Texas.



March 27, 2007

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Chair, Senate Education Committee
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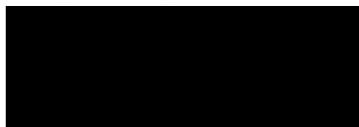
RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a speech therapist who works with children with special needs I support
create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Thank you for all that you are doing.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

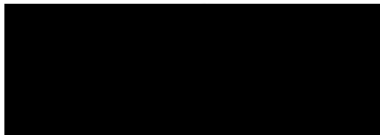
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I have seen how hard it is for families to help their children with the limited resources currently available. [REDACTED] was my best friend in high school and her brother [REDACTED] is autistic. Seeing how a lack of resources frustrated and pained her family, I fully support using my tax dollars to support helping [REDACTED] and all children like him.

Thanks for your time and dedication.

[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

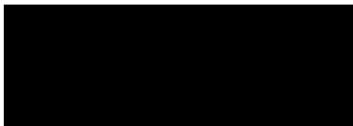
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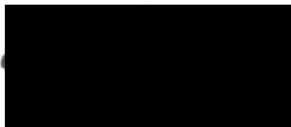
March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I think this would be a great asset to parents with autistic children. I have a 14 year old son with mild autism and it is a fight every year to get him what he needs at school. I am still not completely happy with what is offered at our local school. They try to make the child adjust to them instead of the school trying to make school adjust to them.



March 27, 2007

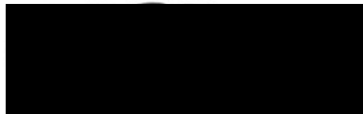
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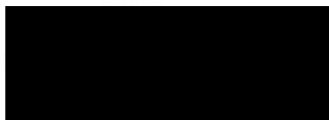
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March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
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P.O. Box 12068
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I am writing in support of the SB 1000 that will help create Autism se
accessibility programs for deserving children. Please see that you wor
taxpaying parents provide the best education possible to Texan childre

Thank you,



March 27, 2007

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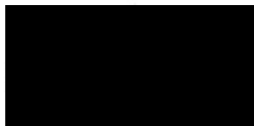
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Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

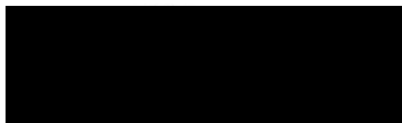
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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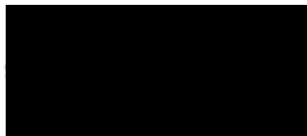
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a teacher and parent, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

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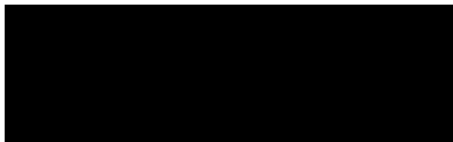
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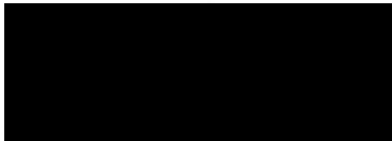
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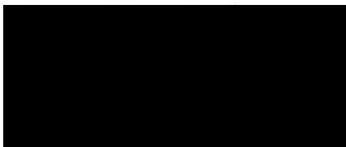
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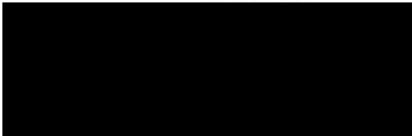
March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a Developmental Pediatrician I deal with educational issues for children with autism many times a week. I strongly support SB 1000, the Autism Services Accessibility Program.



March 27, 2007

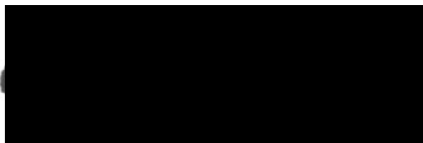
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

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As a mother of a child with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

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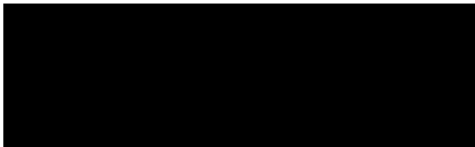
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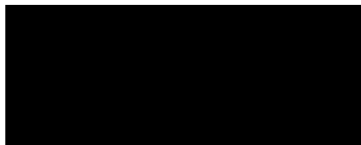
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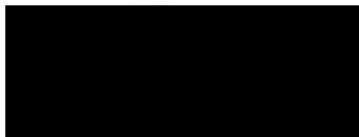
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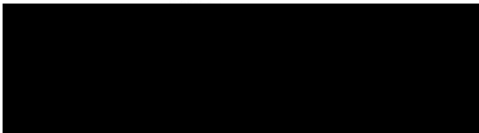
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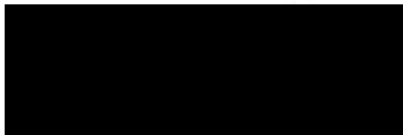


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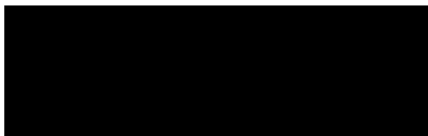
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. This is a much-needed and long-awaited step in providing appropriate environments for children with autism to learn to their full potential.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
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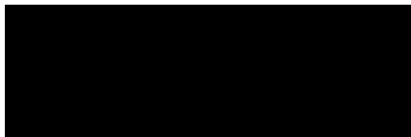
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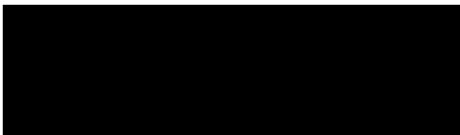
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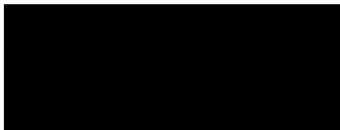
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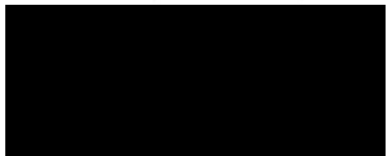
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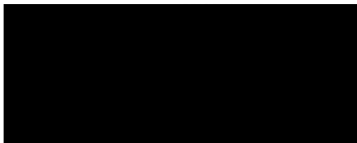
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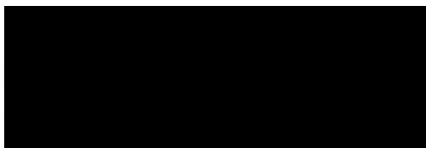
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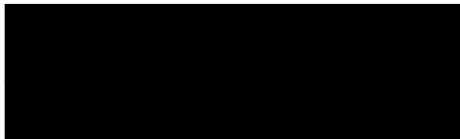
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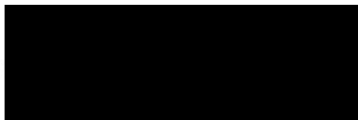
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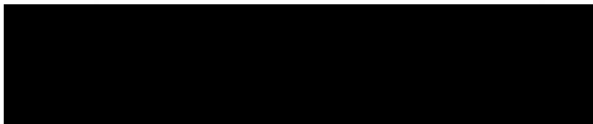
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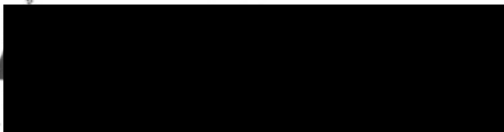
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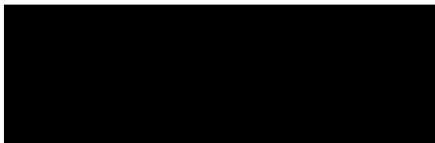
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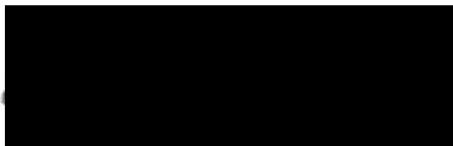
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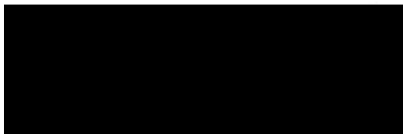
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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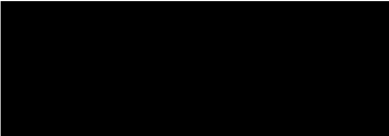
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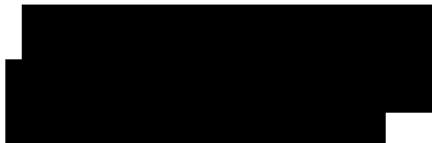
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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P.O. Box 12068
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a mother of a 5-year old son with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I have been praying for this for my son.

Thank you,

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March 27, 2007

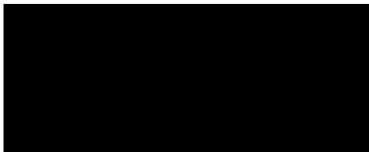
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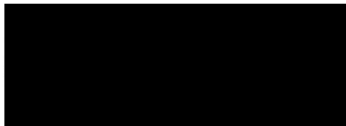
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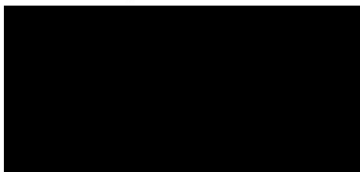
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. I have several friends whose children have autism and who would flourish and benefit tremendously by being in a private school setting.

Thank you,



March 27, 2007

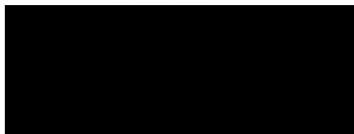
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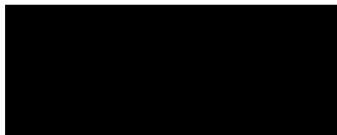
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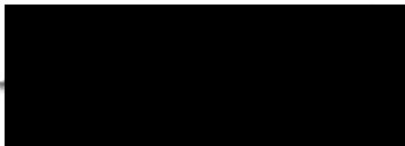
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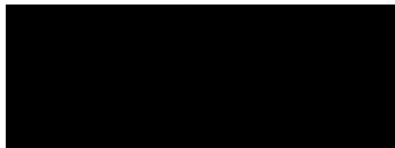
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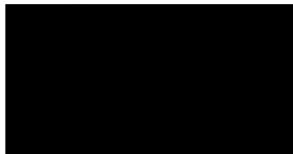
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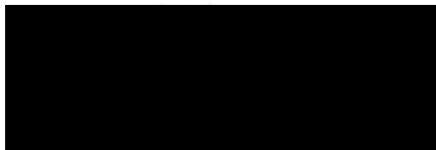
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As the parent of a 12 year old with Autism, I support SB 1000.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

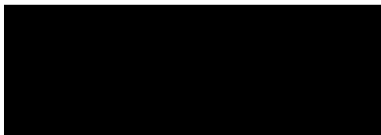
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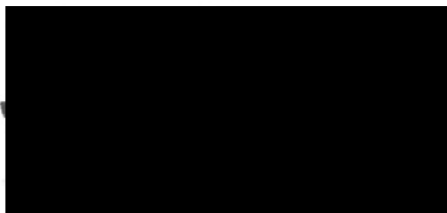
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Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. Thank you for your continued support of children with Autism.

Sincerely,



03/27/07 11:07 AM
36/101

March 27, 2007

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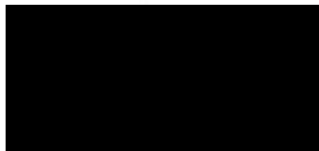
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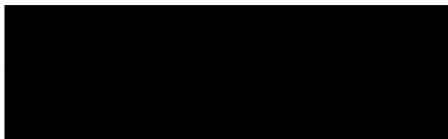
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March 27, 2007

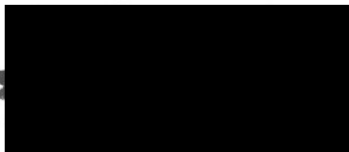
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support for SB 1000!

Sincerely,




March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Dear Members of the Committee, I strongly urge you to work to pass this important bill. In the past 5 years my husband and I have spent over \$100,000 to pay for a private education for our daughter with autism. This has been a severe burden on our finances, wiped out a large portion of our retirement savings and also reduced the assets that we need to set aside for her care after we are no longer living. We willingly make these sacrifices with the knowledge that the training and interventions will increase her ability to function in society and improve her later quality of life. Unfortunately this training is not uniformly available in the public school system. We need your help. The overwhelming majority of families do not have the means to do what we have done. Their children are falling through the cracks. The long term cost of neglect early on will be enormous when all these children are adults and eventually the responsibility of the health and social service agencies of this state.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a Plano, Texas resident for the past 10 years and a parent of a 5 year old Autistic son, [REDACTED], I would like to inform you that I FULLY SUPPORT the Senate Bill 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Since [REDACTED] was diagnosis almost three years ago, my husband and I have spent over \$88,000 on ABA therapy, Occupational therapy, Speech therapy and numerous medical interventions. None of which were covered by insurance. We have had [REDACTED] enrolled in the PPCD program in Plano for the past two years, but do not feel it has been adequate program for him.

This Bill will allow my husband and I to send [REDACTED] to a school that SPECIALIZES in Autism, where there are trained professionals who will utilize the latest therapies to make a difference in my child's life.

I am deeply grateful to you and your staff for all the hard work and efforts in support of this cause.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

March 20, 2007

Senator John J. Carona
8080 N. Central Expressway
Suite 1440, LB44
Dallas, TX 75206

Re: Senate Bill 1000-Service Accessibility for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Dear Senator Carona,

Imagine that you are bright, vibrant, a quick learner and have an engaging personality. Unfortunately, you are incapable of speaking to others without really knowing why. How would that make you feel?

Our three year old son, was recently diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. As an autism spectrum disorder, behavior is characterized by mild but significant developmental differences in the areas of communication, social relatedness and emotional response. As a result, is not equipped to understand social interaction and therefore stares confounded at the interactions of other children and adults, unsure how to join in. Yet, it is our understanding that if treated early and coached properly, can learn to detect social cues to communicate and lead a fairly normal life.

We have been pleased with our initial assistance from our home school district, the Independent School District and its staff and consultants. However, we think there will be certain time periods within Preston's educational development that other Texas public or accredited private schools may provide more appropriate services for his specific needs.

Senate Bill 1000 benefits and other autistic children facing a wide-range of individual challenges by allowing educational flexibility for essential intervening strategies of their particular symptoms. Your support and passage of this bill gives these great Texas kids a much needed push to become productive and instrumental citizens of our State of Texas.

We appreciate your time and consideration of Senate Bill 1000. Which legislative bills are important to you this year? Why?

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area of the letter.

cc: Senator Florence Shapiro
Members, Senate Committee on Education
Representative Dan Branch

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

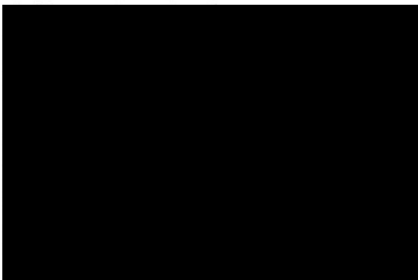
RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I have a son who was diagnosed with Autism at age 3. Like any parent, I want my son to have the opportunity to receive a great education. My son tries so hard to learn as much as he can. However, he gets frustrated because he is trying so hard to learn, but his present public school is not capable of effectively meeting his educational needs. As parents, it is equally frustrating for my husband and me, that we do not have the funds to place our son in the appropriate educational setting. The cost for providing appropriate education for an autistic child is out of reach for most affected families. We truly need the state to believe in our children and to know that with the proper education in place, they too will be able to grow up and contribute positively to our society.

Therefore, I implore the committee to please give my son and the autistic children of the state of Texas a fighting chance to have a meaningful, happy, productive, and successful life. I implore the committee to PLEASE put an end to the wasting of such valuable lives, by ending this educational atrocity affecting our autistic children in the state of Texas, by passing the Texas Senate Bill 1000, the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Thank you.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Testimony of Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing March 27, 2007

Dear Senator Shapiro:

We support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP) in Texas. We appreciate your continued dedication to improving education for children with autism in Texas.

It wouldn't be fair to our 9-year old son with autism not to also express our disappointment that the bill was not a replication of the successful Autism Scholarship Program in Ohio. ASAP "gives parents the flexibility to determine the kind of education that best meets their child's particular needs", including a private accredited school. However, for parents like us whose child does not yet have the basic language and learning skills to benefit from the group instruction at these schools, the bill is not so flexible. The Ohio law allows parents to use private providers, registered and approved by their Department of Education. We understand that ASAP is a bill unique to Texas, however we are asking that you amend the ASAP bill to also include TEA-approved non-public facilities where evidence-based techniques are used. Our son is currently educated at a private facility that specializes in educating children with autism. The goal of this facility is to teach children the skills they need to succeed in a classroom environment found in our Texas public or private schools.

Again, we appreciate your continued commitment to children with autism and support SB 1000.

Sincerely,



From: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]
Date: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Sirs:

My name is Marcela [REDACTED] and i reside in the county of Val Verde in Del Rio, TX. I am a single mother of 2 sons one of which is Autistic w a dx of PDD and ADHD, he is 4 yrs old, his name is [REDACTED] he is half African American & Hispanic. He attends a PPCD classroom for only 2 hrs a day. I had had to fight for Speech Services, i wasted about 15 hrs of ARD's just to CONVINCe them that he needed speech therapy when he is a non-verbal child. I still have yet to spend more countless hrs for him to recieve Occupational Therapy. Being that i am a single mother, i have yet to get a job, since my son's illness has become a hardship, no employer will hire a mother who has to constantly get out of work because the supposed care in the public school was inadequate. My son [REDACTED] can be a good functioning part of society if he recieves the proper therapies to make him a success. He recieves Speech Therapy only and recieves no other services thru the local school distric. I am in support of SB1000, since it will afford my child a REAL opporunity at success in life with an education. This bill will motivate schools to provide the best care for my child. Whether here in Del Rio public school or in another town.

Thank You for your patience in this matter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF IT, I HOPE IM NOT TOO LATE IN SENDING IT...

MARCELA IN DEL RIO

To: The Senate Committee on Education

I am in favor to support the Senate Bill 1000 to establish the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Even though schools offer special-ed assistance, many children with autism do not make adequate yearly progress due to the large class size and inadequate training for the special-ed staff in the public setting. This is leaving parents to either homeschool or sending them to very expensive private schools which most people cannot afford.

In our case we had no choice, but to send our son to live with his grandparents, out of state, in order for him to make yearly progress in behavior and academically. If ASAP had been in existence last year, we would not had the need to send him to a public school out of state. Instead we would have taken the opportunity to send him to a private school or transfer to another district.

Sincerely,





To: The Senate Committee on Education
Re: SB1000

Thank you so much for your efforts to improve the education of autistic students in Texas. I am a retired Texas public school teacher, having taught in Plano, Richardson and at the university level. Almost half my career was dedicated to Reading Recovery, a very specialized and highly successful program. Throughout my career I observed that, with the notable exception of Reading Recovery, the public school is not truly successful with children who have special needs. Special Education was chief among the failed programs I observed.

In the medical field, general practitioners do well enough with routine cases but a specialist is required for difficult and specific problems. Just as specialists are required for the provision of special *medical* care, children with special *educational* needs also require the services of specialists. They will not and cannot find what they require within the Texas public school system. Public school personnel are general practitioners. Try as they may, they simply cannot successfully and cost-effectively provide the kind of intense, individualized specialized education that is required.

That is why I am strongly in favor of an autism scholarship program. The future of every child with special needs is continuing to be sacrificed in the public schools. At present, Ohio seems to be leading the way by enabling parents to provide needed specialists for their children through the use of autism scholarships. I ardently hope Texas will not only match but will surpass what Ohio provides.

Again, thank you for your commitment to children and especially to those with autism.

Sincerely yours,



I am a parent of a 13 year old child diagnosed with autism. She is currently being served by the public school program. On many occasions we have run into problems with the public school district where our child was being asked to fit into a box. Many programs designed by all good intend may serve the needs of some children, but do not seem to meet the needs of many, especially the growing population of high functioning children with Autism. This has left the parents with almost no option.

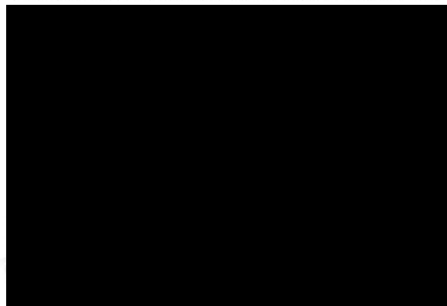
This Bill if passed will immensely help parents' to access programs that will meet the educational needs for their children. Every child is entitled to a free and appropriate education. Mine may be, one in many for the law makers, but for me she is the only.

Pass the bill and God Bless America.



I am in favor of the passage of SB1000. Parents of children with autism need and should be given the flexibility to choose from a variety of education options for their own child. Having options would provide the best path to success for all of these children given their complexity and special requirements. We all know a “one size fits all” educational program doesn’t work for children with autism, hence the outcry for help.

Please consider and pass this bill. It would be a wonderful investment for the future of Texas, children, and their families.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I received an email from my mother and sister about this bill that you are looking to pass in Texas. My autistic brother [REDACTED] is 21 years old. For the past 18 years or so, I have watched my mother struggle with the challenges of having an autistic child. These challenges affected the whole family, as [REDACTED] had pretty severe behavioral issues and we did not have the funds to place him in an appropriate school. Our lives revolved around his needs and reactions to his environment.

The critical part of this picture, and the one that is so insightfully addressed by this bill, is that if [REDACTED] had some sort of appropriate school environment, these behaviors would certainly have been improved. My mother did her best in locating alternative therapies for [REDACTED] outside of the school system, but it was pretty obvious that these therapies were unassisted, and even counteracted, by the "learning" environment he had to attend on a daily basis. Autism is a complex disorder, and children suffering from the communication barriers it produces and behavioral reactions it evokes deserve more than to be shoved into a classroom with other children with disabilities that differ so strongly from the mysterious and complex disorder that is autism. I say this not to put down children with other disabilities, but merely to contrast them with autistics, about whom little is known, and whose intelligence, underneath that cloud of communication disorders, is demonstrably strong given the right therapy.

Anyway, as someone whose life has been deeply affected by autism, and the hardships that can arise when it is not treated in a competent professional manner, I strongly back this bill. Its implementation in a state like Texas, with inarguably weak public education infrastructure (at the primary and secondary levels), is the kind of godsend that we have to grab with both hands before the "dream" vanishes! I am in awe of and fully support Senator Shapiro and her initiative. I strongly back SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Thanks so much for the opportunity to finally say those words.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

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Dear Senator Shapiro:

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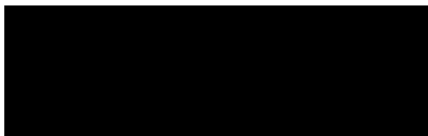
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

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Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. This is a much-needed and long-awaited step in providing appropriate environments for children with autism to learn to their full potential.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

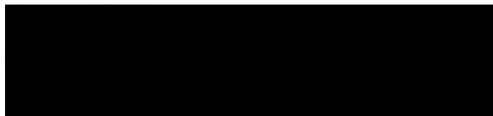
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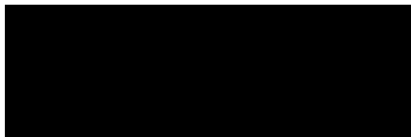
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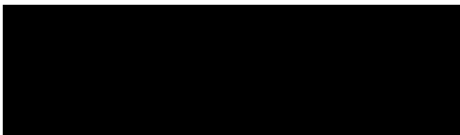
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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Dear Senator Shapiro:

As parents of a child with autism, we support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

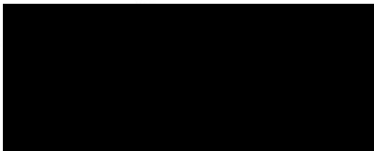
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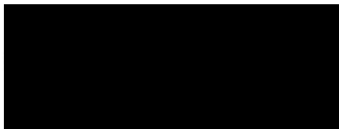
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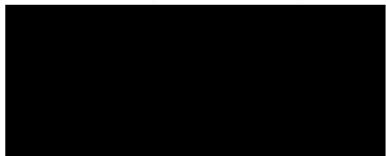
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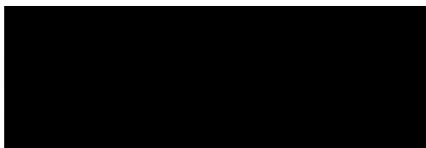
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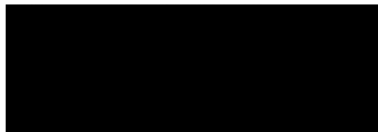
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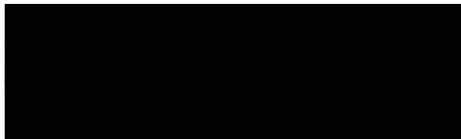
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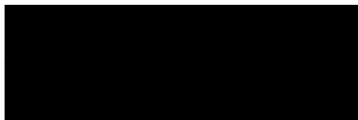
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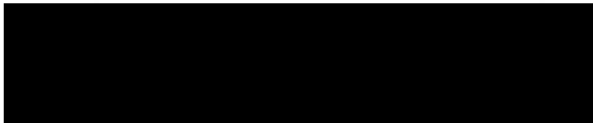
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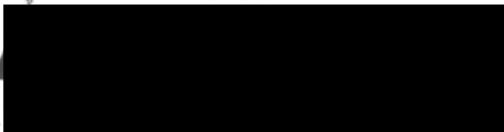
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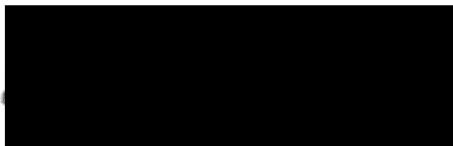
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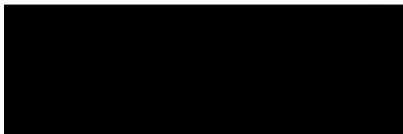
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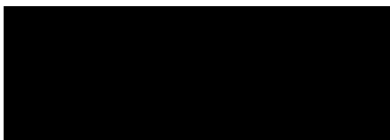
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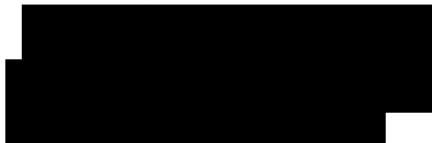
Honorable Florence Shapiro
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RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a mother of a 5-year old son with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I have been praying for this for my son.

Thank you,

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March 27, 2007

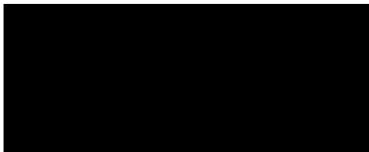
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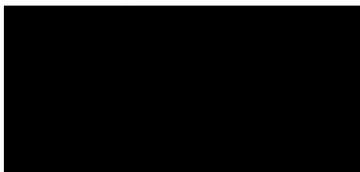
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Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. I have several friends whose children have autism and who would flourish and benefit tremendously by being in a private school setting.

Thank you,



March 27, 2007

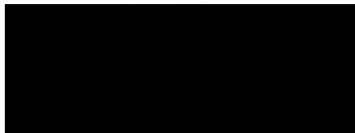
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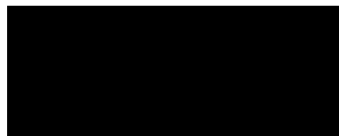
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Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

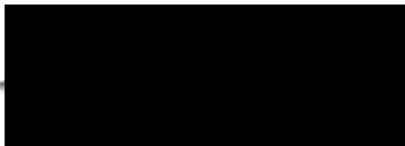
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

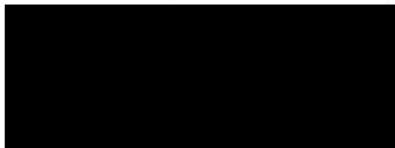
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

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Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

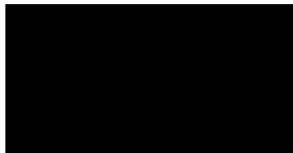
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

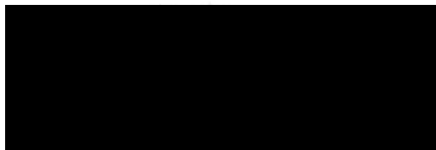
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As the parent of a 12 year old with Autism, I support SB 1000.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

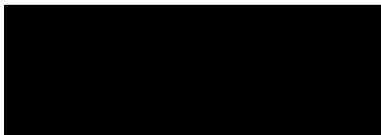
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a mother of 3 boys with autism, I support SB 1000
Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

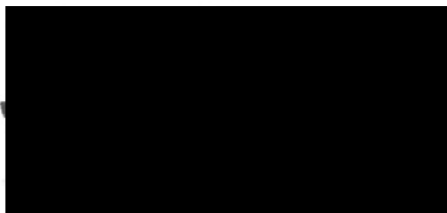
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. Thank you for your continued support of children with Autism.

Sincerely,



20070327 09:44:13
36/101

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

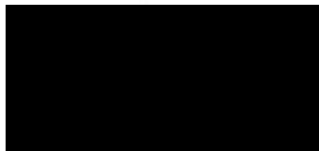
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As mother to a 5-year old child with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

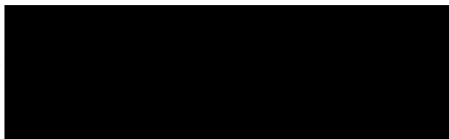
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Account.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

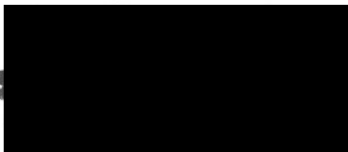
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support for SB 1000!

Sincerely,




March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Dear Members of the Committee, I strongly urge you to work to pass this important bill. In the past 5 years my husband and I have spent over \$100,000 to pay for a private education for our daughter with autism. This has been a severe burden on our finances, wiped out a large portion of our retirement savings and also reduced the assets that we need to set aside for her care after we are no longer living. We willingly make these sacrifices with the knowledge that the training and interventions will increase her ability to function in society and improve her later quality of life. Unfortunately this training is not uniformly available in the public school system. We need your help. The overwhelming majority of families do not have the means to do what we have done. Their children are falling through the cracks. The long term cost of neglect early on will be enormous when all these children are adults and eventually the responsibility of the health and social service agencies of this state.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a Plano, Texas resident for the past 10 years and a parent of a 5 year old Autistic son, [REDACTED], I would like to inform you that I FULLY SUPPORT the Senate Bill 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Since [REDACTED] was diagnosis almost three years ago, my husband and I have spent over \$88,000 on ABA therapy, Occupational therapy, Speech therapy and numerous medical interventions. None of which were covered by insurance. We have had [REDACTED] enrolled in the PPCD program in Plano for the past two years, but do not feel it has been adequate program for him.

This Bill will allow my husband and I to send [REDACTED] to a school that SPECIALIZES in Autism, where there are trained professionals who will utilize the latest therapies to make a difference in my child's life.

I am deeply grateful to you and your staff for all the hard work and efforts in support of this cause.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

March 20, 2007

Senator John J. Carona
8080 N. Central Expressway
Suite 1440, LB44
Dallas, TX 75206

Re: Senate Bill 1000-Service Accessibility for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Dear Senator Carona,

Imagine that you are bright, vibrant, a quick learner and have an engaging personality. Unfortunately, you are incapable of speaking to others without really knowing why. How would that make you feel?

Our three year old son, was recently diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. As an autism spectrum disorder, behavior is characterized by mild but significant developmental differences in the areas of communication, social relatedness and emotional response. As a result, is not equipped to understand social interaction and therefore stares confounded at the interactions of other children and adults, unsure how to join in. Yet, it is our understanding that if treated early and coached properly, can learn to detect social cues to communicate and lead a fairly normal life.

We have been pleased with our initial assistance from our home school district, the Independent School District and its staff and consultants. However, we think there will be certain time periods within Preston's educational development that other Texas public or accredited private schools may provide more appropriate services for his specific needs.

Senate Bill 1000 benefits and other autistic children facing a wide-range of individual challenges by allowing educational flexibility for essential intervening strategies of their particular symptoms. Your support and passage of this bill gives these great Texas kids a much needed push to become productive and instrumental citizens of our State of Texas.

We appreciate your time and consideration of Senate Bill 1000. Which legislative bills are important to you this year? Why?

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area of the letter.

cc: Senator Florence Shapiro
Members, Senate Committee on Education
Representative Dan Branch

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

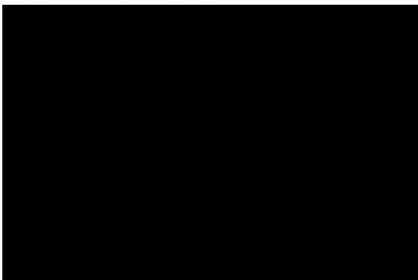
RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I have a son who was diagnosed with Autism at age 3. Like any parent, I want my son to have the opportunity to receive a great education. My son tries so hard to learn as much as he can. However, he gets frustrated because he is trying so hard to learn, but his present public school is not capable of effectively meeting his educational needs. As parents, it is equally frustrating for my husband and me, that we do not have the funds to place our son in the appropriate educational setting. The cost for providing appropriate education for an autistic child is out of reach for most affected families. We truly need the state to believe in our children and to know that with the proper education in place, they too will be able to grow up and contribute positively to our society.

Therefore, I implore the committee to please give my son and the autistic children of the state of Texas a fighting chance to have a meaningful, happy, productive, and successful life. I implore the committee to PLEASE put an end to the wasting of such valuable lives, by ending this educational atrocity affecting our autistic children in the state of Texas, by passing the Texas Senate Bill 1000, the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Thank you.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Testimony of Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing March 27, 2007

Dear Senator Shapiro:

We support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP) in Texas. We appreciate your continued dedication to improving education for children with autism in Texas.

It wouldn't be fair to our 9-year old son with autism not to also express our disappointment that the bill was not a replication of the successful Autism Scholarship Program in Ohio. ASAP "gives parents the flexibility to determine the kind of education that best meets their child's particular needs", including a private accredited school. However, for parents like us whose child does not yet have the basic language and learning skills to benefit from the group instruction at these schools, the bill is not so flexible. The Ohio law allows parents to use private providers, registered and approved by their Department of Education. We understand that ASAP is a bill unique to Texas, however we are asking that you amend the ASAP bill to also include TEA-approved non-public facilities where evidence-based techniques are used. Our son is currently educated at a private facility that specializes in educating children with autism. The goal of this facility is to teach children the skills they need to succeed in a classroom environment found in our Texas public or private schools.

Again, we appreciate your continued commitment to children with autism and support SB 1000.

Sincerely,



From: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]
Date: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Sirs:

My name is Marcela [REDACTED] and i reside in the county of Val Verde in Del Rio, TX. I am a single mother of 2 sons one of which is Autistic w a dx of PDD and ADHD, he is 4 yrs old, his name is [REDACTED] he is half African American & Hispanic. He attends a PPCD classroom for only 2 hrs a day. I had had to fight for Speech Services, i wasted about 15 hrs of ARD's just to CONVINCe them that he needed speech therapy when he is a non-verbal child. I still have yet to spend more countless hrs for him to recieve Occupational Therapy. Being that i am a single mother, i have yet to get a job, since my son's illness has become a hardship, no employer will hire a mother who has to constantly get out of work because the supposed care in the public school was inadequate. My son [REDACTED] can be a good functioning part of society if he recieves the proper therapies to make him a success. He recieves Speech Therapy only and recieves no other services thru the local school distric. I am in support of SB1000, since it will afford my child a REAL opporunity at success in life with an education. This bill will motivate schools to provide the best care for my child. Whether here in Del Rio public school or in another town.

Thank You for your patience in this matter

[REDACTED] PLZ LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF IT, I HOPE IM NOT TOO LATE IN SENDING IT...

MARCELA IN DEL RIO

To: The Senate Committee on Education

I am in favor to support the Senate Bill 1000 to establish the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Even though schools offer special-ed assistance, many children with autism do not make adequate yearly progress due to the large class size and inadequate training for the special-ed staff in the public setting. This is leaving parents to either homeschool or sending them to very expensive private schools which most people cannot afford.

In our case we had no choice, but to send our son to live with his grandparents, out of state, in order for him to make yearly progress in behavior and academically. If ASAP had been in existence last year, we would not had the need to send him to a public school out of state. Instead we would have taken the opportunity to send him to a private school or transfer to another district.

Sincerely,





To: The Senate Committee on Education
Re: SB1000

Thank you so much for your efforts to improve the education of autistic students in Texas. I am a retired Texas public school teacher, having taught in Plano, Richardson and at the university level. Almost half my career was dedicated to Reading Recovery, a very specialized and highly successful program. Throughout my career I observed that, with the notable exception of Reading Recovery, the public school is not truly successful with children who have special needs. Special Education was chief among the failed programs I observed.

In the medical field, general practitioners do well enough with routine cases but a specialist is required for difficult and specific problems. Just as specialists are required for the provision of special *medical* care, children with special *educational* needs also require the services of specialists. They will not and cannot find what they require within the Texas public school system. Public school personnel are general practitioners. Try as they may, they simply cannot successfully and cost-effectively provide the kind of intense, individualized specialized education that is required.

That is why I am strongly in favor of an autism scholarship program. The future of every child with special needs is continuing to be sacrificed in the public schools. At present, Ohio seems to be leading the way by enabling parents to provide needed specialists for their children through the use of autism scholarships. I ardently hope Texas will not only match but will surpass what Ohio provides.

Again, thank you for your commitment to children and especially to those with autism.

Sincerely yours,



I am a parent of a 13 year old child diagnosed with autism. She is currently being served by the public school program. On many occasions we have run into problems with the public school district where our child was being asked to fit into a box. Many programs designed by all good intend may serve the needs of some children, but do not seem to meet the needs of many, especially the growing population of high functioning children with Autism. This has left the parents with almost no option.

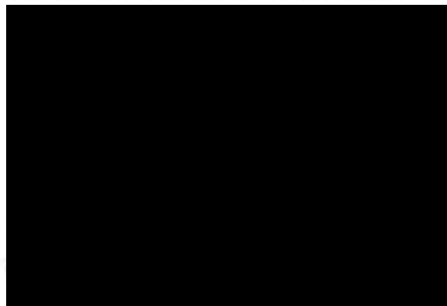
This Bill if passed will immensely help parents' to access programs that will meet the educational needs for their children. Every child is entitled to a free and appropriate education. Mine may be, one in many for the law makers, but for me she is the only.

Pass the bill and God Bless America.



I am in favor of the passage of SB1000. Parents of children with autism need and should be given the flexibility to choose from a variety of education options for their own child. Having options would provide the best path to success for all of these children given their complexity and special requirements. We all know a “one size fits all” educational program doesn’t work for children with autism, hence the outcry for help.

Please consider and pass this bill. It would be a wonderful investment for the future of Texas, children, and their families.



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I received an email from my mother and sister about this bill that you are looking to pass in Texas. My autistic brother [REDACTED] is 21 years old. For the past 18 years or so, I have watched my mother struggle with the challenges of having an autistic child. These challenges affected the whole family, as [REDACTED] had pretty severe behavioral issues and we did not have the funds to place him in an appropriate school. Our lives revolved around his needs and reactions to his environment.

The critical part of this picture, and the one that is so insightfully addressed by this bill, is that if [REDACTED] had some sort of appropriate school environment, these behaviors would certainly have been improved. My mother did her best in locating alternative therapies for [REDACTED] outside of the school system, but it was pretty obvious that these therapies were unassisted, and even counteracted, by the "learning" environment he had to attend on a daily basis. Autism is a complex disorder, and children suffering from the communication barriers it produces and behavioral reactions it evokes deserve more than to be shoved into a classroom with other children with disabilities that differ so strongly from the mysterious and complex disorder that is autism. I say this not to put down children with other disabilities, but merely to contrast them with autistics, about whom little is known, and whose intelligence, underneath that cloud of communication disorders, is demonstrably strong given the right therapy.

Anyway, as someone whose life has been deeply affected by autism, and the hardships that can arise when it is not treated in a competent professional manner, I strongly back this bill. Its implementation in a state like Texas, with inarguably weak public education infrastructure (at the primary and secondary levels), is the kind of godsend that we have to grab with both hands before the "dream" vanishes! I am in awe of and fully support Senator Shapiro and her initiative. I strongly back SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Thanks so much for the opportunity to finally say those words.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

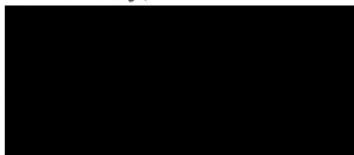
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

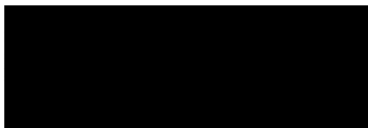
Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

MaryAnn [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Arlington, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program.

Sincerely,

Carol [REDACTED], League City, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,

Karen [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in

Sincerely,

Debbie [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Holly [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Spring, Tx. [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Rebecca & Jaweed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Austin, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Pro,

Sincerely,

Brian and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex.

Sincerely,

Marco [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
San Antonio, Tx. [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Rhonda [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a parent of a child with autism, I support SB 1000 Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Sandy [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

League City, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Serv

Sincerely,

Tamara [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a mother of a 5-year old son with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I have been praying for this for my son.

Thank you,

Jaimie [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Denton TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jane [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Austin, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

David [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Southlake, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Marlen [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Rowlett, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hear

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services

Sincerely,

Annetta [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Allen, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. I have several friends whose children have autism and who would flourish and benefit tremendously by being in a private school setting.

Thank you,

Jennifer [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Coppell, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 –

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autis

Sincerely,

Kay [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Athens, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Pub

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism S

Sincerely,

Diane [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Plano, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Doris [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Coppell, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex.

Sincerely,

Tammy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Lewisville, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Access

Sincerely,

Shelley [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Plano, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As the parent of a 12 year old with Autism, I support SB 1000.

Sincerely,

Camber [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Dallas, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a mother of 3 boys with autism
Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Aaron [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Harlingen, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. Thank you for your continued support of children with Autism.

Sincerely,

Maria [REDACTED]

Nurse Case Manager
[REDACTED]

Houston, Texas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Pro,

Sincerely,

Erin [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Irving, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As mother to a 5-year old child with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Kristin [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Elgin, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Angelique [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Pro

Sincerely,

Dionne [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Arlington, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support for SB 1000!

Sincerely,

Wendy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Dear Members of the Committee, I strongly urge you to work to pass this important bill. In the past 5 years my husband and I have spent over \$100,000 to pay for a private education for our daughter with autism. This has been a severe burden on our finances, wiped out a large portion of our retirement savings and also reduced the assets that we need to set aside for her care after we are no longer living. We willingly make these sacrifices with the knowledge that the training and interventions will increase her ability to function in society and improve her later quality of life. Unfortunately this training is not uniformly available in the public school system. We need your help. The overwhelming majority of families do not have the means to do what we have done. Their children are falling through the cracks. The long term cost of neglect early on will be enormous when all these children are adults and eventually the responsibility of the health and social service agencies of this state.

Catherine and Allen [REDACTED]

San Antonio, TX

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a Plano, Texas resident for the past 10 years and a parent of a 5 year old Autistic son, [REDACTED] would like to inform you that I FULLY SUPPORT the Senate Bill 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Since [REDACTED] was diagnosis almost three years ago, my husband and I have spent over \$88,000 on ABA therapy, Occupational therapy, Speech therapy and numerous medical interventions. None of which were covered by insurance. We have had [REDACTED] enrolled in the PPCD program in Plano for the past two years, but do not feel it has been adequate program for him.

This Bill will allow my husband and I to send [REDACTED] to a school that SPECIALIZES in Autism, where there are trained professionals who will utilize the latest therapies to make a difference in my child's life.

I am deeply grateful to you and your staff for all the hard work and efforts in support of this cause.

Sincerely,

Stacey [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Plano, Texas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

March 20, 2007

Senator John J. Carona
8080 N. Central Expressway
Suite 1440, LB44
Dallas, TX 75206

Re: Senate Bill 1000-Service Accessibility for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Dear Senator Carona,

Imagine that you are bright, vibrant, a quick learner and have an engaging personality. Unfortunately, you are incapable of speaking to others without really knowing why. How would that make you feel?

[REDACTED] Our three year old son, was recently diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. As an autism spectrum disorder, [REDACTED] behavior is characterized by mild but significant developmental differences in the areas of communication, social relatedness and emotional response. As a result, [REDACTED] is not equipped to understand social interaction and therefore stares confounded at the interactions of other children and adults, unsure how to join in. Yet, it is our understanding that if treated early and coached properly, [REDACTED] can learn to detect social cues to communicate and lead a fairly normal life.

We have been pleased with our initial assistance from our home school district, the [REDACTED] Independent School District and its staff and consultants. However, we think there will be certain time periods within Preston's educational development that other Texas public or accredited private schools may provide more appropriate services for his specific needs.

Senate Bill 1000 benefits [REDACTED] and other autistic children facing a wide-range of individual challenges by allowing educational flexibility for essential intervening strategies of their particular symptoms. Your support and passage of this bill gives these great Texas kids a much needed push to become productive and instrumental citizens of our State of Texas.

We appreciate your time and consideration of Senate Bill 1000. Which legislative bills are important to you this year? Why?

Sincerely,

Lloyd & Melinda

Lloyd and Melinda [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

cc: Senator Florence Shapiro
Members, Senate Committee on Education
Representative Dan Branch

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I have a son who was diagnosed with Autism at age 3. Like any parent, I want my son to have the opportunity to receive a great education. My son tries so hard to learn as much as he can. However, he gets frustrated because he is trying so hard to learn, but his present public school is not capable of effectively meeting his educational needs. As parents, it is equally frustrating for my husband and me, that we do not have the funds to place our son in the appropriate educational setting. The cost for providing appropriate education for an autistic child is out of reach for most affected families. We truly need the state to believe in our children and to know that with the proper education in place, they too will be able to grow up and contribute positively to our society.

Therefore, I implore the committee to please give my son and the autistic children of the state of Texas a fighting chance to have a meaningful, happy, productive, and successful life. I implore the committee to PLEASE put an end to the wasting of such valuable lives, by ending this educational atrocity affecting our autistic children in the state of Texas, by passing the Texas Senate Bill 1000, the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Thank you.

Tessa [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Seabrook, TX [REDACTED]

Hm: [REDACTED]

Wk: [REDACTED]

Cell: [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Testimony of Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing March 27, 2007

Dear Senator Shapiro:

We support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP) in Texas. We appreciate your continued dedication to improving education for children with autism in Texas.

It wouldn't be fair to our 9-year old son with autism not to also express our disappointment that the bill was not a replication of the successful Autism Scholarship Program in Ohio. ASAP "gives parents the flexibility to determine the kind of education that best meets their child's particular needs", including a private accredited school. However, for parents like us whose child does not yet have the basic language and learning skills to benefit from the group instruction at these schools, the bill is not so flexible. The Ohio law allows parents to use private providers, registered and approved by their Department of Education. We understand that ASAP is a bill unique to Texas, however we are asking that you amend the ASAP bill to also include TEA-approved non-public facilities where evidence-based techniques are used. Our son is currently educated at a private facility that specializes in educating children with autism. The goal of this facility is to teach children the skills they need to succeed in a classroom environment found in our Texas public or private schools.

Again, we appreciate your continued commitment to children with autism and support SB 1000.

Sincerely,

Paul and Kim [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Plano, TX [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: testimony [REDACTED]
Date: March 26, 2007 12:28:55 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Sirs:

My name is Marcela [REDACTED] and i reside in the county of Val Verde in Del Rio, TX. I am a single mother of 2 sons one of which is Autistic w a dx of PDD and ADHD, he is 4 yrs old, his name is [REDACTED] he is half African American & Hispanic. He attends a PPCD classroom for only 2 hrs a day. I had had to fight for Speech Services, i wasted about 15 hrs of ARD's just to CONVINCe them that he needed speech therapy when he is a non-verbal child. I still have yet to spend more countless hrs for him to recieve Occupational Therapy. Being that i am a single mother, i have yet to get a job, since my son's illness has become a hardship, no employer will hire a mother who has to constantly get out of work because the supposed care in the public school was inadequate. My son [REDACTED] can be a good functioning part of society if he recieves the proper therapies to make him a success. He recieves Speech Therapy only and recieves no other services thru the local school distric. I am in support of SB1000, since it will afford my child a REAL opporunity at success in life with an education. This bill will motivate schools to provide the best care for my child. Whether here in Del Rio public school or in another town.

Thank You for your patience in this matter

Marcela [REDACTED]
for

[REDACTED] 4yrs

[REDACTED] PLZ LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF IT, I HOPE IM NOT TOO LATE IN SENDING IT...

MARCELA IN DEL RIO

To: The Senate Committee on Education

I am in favor to support the Senate Bill 1000 to establish the Autism Services Accessibility Program (ASAP).

Even though schools offer special-ed assistance, many children with autism do not make adequate yearly progress due to the large class size and inadequate training for the special-ed staff in the public setting. This is leaving parents to either homeschool or sending them to very expensive private schools which most people cannot afford.

In our case we had no choice, but to send our son to live with his grandparents, out of state, in order for him to make yearly progress in behavior and academically. If ASAP had been in existence last year, we would not had the need to send him to a public school out of state. Instead we would have taken the opportunity to send him to a private school or transfer to another district.

Sincerely,

Anne [REDACTED]

Anne [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Plano, TX [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
March 23, 2007

To: The Senate Committee on Education
Re: SB1000

Thank you so much for your efforts to improve the education of autistic students in Texas. I am a retired Texas public school teacher, having taught in Plano, Richardson and at the university level. Almost half my career was dedicated to Reading Recovery, a very specialized and highly successful program. Throughout my career I observed that, with the notable exception of Reading Recovery, the public school is not truly successful with children who have special needs. Special Education was chief among the failed programs I observed.

In the medical field, general practitioners do well enough with routine cases but a specialist is required for difficult and specific problems. Just as specialists are required for the provision of special *medical* care, children with special *educational* needs also require the services of specialists. They will not and cannot find what they require within the Texas public school system. Public school personnel are general practitioners. Try as they may, they simply cannot successfully and cost-effectively provide the kind of intense, individualized specialized education that is required.

That is why I am strongly in favor of an autism scholarship program. The future of every child with special needs is continuing to be sacrificed in the public schools. At present, Ohio seems to be leading the way by enabling parents to provide needed specialists for their children through the use of autism scholarships. I ardently hope Texas will not only match but will surpass what Ohio provides.

Again, thank you for your commitment to children and especially to those with autism.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth [REDACTED]

Ruth [REDACTED]

I am a parent of a 13 year old child diagnosed with autism. She is currently being served by the public school program. On many occasions we have run into problems with the public school district where our child was being asked to fit into a box. Many programs designed by all good intend may serve the needs of some children, but do not seem to meet the needs of many, especially the growing population of high functioning children with Autism. This has left the parents with almost no option.

This Bill if passed will immensely help parents' to access programs that will meet the educational needs for their children. Every child is entitled to a free and appropriate education. Mine may be, one in many for the law makers, but for me she is the only.

Pass the bill and God Bless America.

Saved

Sabhiya [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]


Plano, Tx [REDACTED]

I am in favor of the passage of SB1000. Parents of children with autism need and should be given the flexibility to choose from a variety of education options for their own child. Having options would provide the best path to success for all of these children given their complexity and special requirements. We all know a “one size fits all” educational program doesn’t work for children with autism, hence the outcry for help.

Please consider and pass this bill. It would be a wonderful investment for the future of Texas, children, and their families.



Ron



Plano, Texas



March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. I received an email from my mother and sister about this bill that you are looking to pass in Texas. My autistic brother [REDACTED] is 21 years old. For the past 18 years or so, I have watched my mother struggle with the challenges of having an autistic child. These challenges affected the whole family, as [REDACTED] had pretty severe behavioral issues and we did not have the funds to place him in an appropriate school. Our lives revolved around his needs and reactions to his environment.

The critical part of this picture, and the one that is so insightfully addressed by this bill, is that if [REDACTED] had some sort of appropriate school environment, these behaviors would certainly have been improved. My mother did her best in locating alternative therapies for [REDACTED] outside of the school system, but it was pretty obvious that these therapies were unassisted, and even counteracted, by the "learning" environment he had to attend on a daily basis. Autism is a complex disorder, and children suffering from the communication barriers it produces and behavioral reactions it evokes deserve more than to be shoved into a classroom with other children with disabilities that differ so strongly from the mysterious and complex disorder that is autism. I say this not to put down children with other disabilities, but merely to contrast them with autistics, about whom little is known, and whose intelligence, underneath that cloud of communication disorders, is demonstrably strong given the right therapy.

Anyway, as someone whose life has been deeply affected by autism, and the hardships that can arise when it is not treated in a competent professional manner, I strongly back this bill. Its implementation in a state like Texas, with inarguably weak public education infrastructure (at the primary and secondary levels), is the kind of godsend that we have to grab with both hands before the "dream" vanishes! I am in awe of and fully support Senator Shapiro and her initiative. I strongly back SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. Thanks so much for the opportunity to finally say those words.

Sincerely,

Chloe [REDACTED]
for [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Richardson, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,

Jennifer [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Eustace, TX [REDACTED]

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Adrian [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Friendswood, Tx. [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in

Sincerely,

Andrea [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Christina [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Archer City, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Access

Sincerely,

Judy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Houston, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000. I have a 5-year-old son with autism. OUR DISTRICT (LAKE TRAVIS ISD) WILL NOT SERVE OUR SON, SO WE HAVE TO MOVE TO Austin ISD FOR SERVICES. This move is quite costly for our family both emotionally and financially. If an Autism Services Accessibility Program were in place now we would not have to uproot.

Thank you very much.

Jennifer [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Austin, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Jane [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

League City, Texas [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,

Diane [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

League City TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Tex

Sincerely,

Mary [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Dickinson, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

As a grandmother to a child with autism, I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Betty [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Melanie [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
League City, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

John [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

League City, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

**Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711**

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas

Sincerely,

Belinda [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Bellaire, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hear

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services

Sincerely,

Mary [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

League City, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 – Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas.

Sincerely,

Frank [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB 1000 - Public Hearing

Dear Senator Shapiro:

We support SB 1000 to create an Autism Services Accessibility Program in Texas. We have a child with autism that has been deeply affected by a poor education program in Texas.

David and Barbara [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
League City, TX [REDACTED]

March 27, 2007

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Co
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Written Support for SB

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I support SB 1000 to create a

Sincerely,

Chyaione [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Seabrook, TX [REDACTED]