

- My name is Marie Rosenbaum and I have two sons on the autism spectrum. I am here today to speak in **favor** of autism scholarships. I feel very strongly that parents and educators need choice in providing FAPE.
- My older son, currently in 10th grade, has received special education services for eleven years total, half of those years in Texas.
- My younger son, currently in third grade, received early childhood intervention services and started special education services at three years old in Texas.
- My support for this bill is partially because of what occurred in my younger son's education at his home campus.
- My son is on the higher end of the Autism spectrum.
- From the very beginning I tried to add certain goals and requests for evaluations to provide services that I thought were obvious and required for my son to improve.
- I learned very quickly that I had to fight for every service that I requested and most times had to settle for watered-down services and goals.
- In my son's first grade year, I ultimately felt forced to go to mediation to attempt to get better speech goals and a half hour more speech time. The result I received for this half-year battle was only to get moderately better speech goals and no additional speech time.
- My son ultimately paid the price for the lack of appropriate goals and services in the second grade. He had behavior problems to the point that he was restrained five times on three separate days.
- He was placed in a room by himself and was taught by an aide most of the day.
- I agreed to transfer my son to the Centralized Social Skills Classroom (CSSC).
- The difference in the training and experience of the CSSC teachers was obvious. Although I was told that my son's behavior may regress before it got better, there was very little regression.
- The staff at the CSSC has never witnessed the severity of behavior that my son displayed at his home campus.

- Even academically there was a huge leap. My son had regressed one reading level over the summer and had not moved up on his reading level at his home campus.
- He started at the CSSC after Spring Break and by the end of the school year, was reading on grade level. My son just passed the Reading TAKS test. If he would have remained at his home campus, I'm not sure if the result would have been the same.
- Only six children in our large suburban school district are in my son's elementary Centralized Social Skills Classroom. This program would benefit so many children on the higher end of the autism spectrum, but it has only been provided to six children.
- I feel that for my son to get the program that is working for him today, the long and arduous path required him to fall apart before he would be provided an appropriate education.
- This is where the Autism Scholarship program would give parents options to receive a free and appropriate public education for their children.
- This program would allow parents the opportunity to find programs outside of their current public school system if necessary that is more flexible and not the "One Size Fits All" mentality the public school system takes in the education of many Autism spectrum children.
- The goal is not to "push these kids through the system" but to educate and prepare these children for their adulthood.
- The public school system **can** provide an appropriate education when they choose to provide proper alternatives.
- When they decide not to provide appropriate educational alternatives, parents need a choice.
- I feel that passing the Autism Scholarship bill would give parents and educators the best opportunity to prepare our children for their future.
- Thank you.