

Chairperson Donovan and Members of House Committee on Health and Human Services

Hello. My name is Wil Beaudoin. My wife and I are parents of our son Andre, who is a 35 year old man with multiple disabilities. He is on the autism spectrum, and, unfortunately, cannot speak. Andre received speech services during his school years, which were prior to the advances in communication supports that began with the iPad and similar technologies. With his move into the adult system of care, his access to Speech and Language professionals disappeared despite the fact that he desperately needs those services. Although it is currently possible to obtain an iPad, those devices are not having the impact in the adult community that is so needed, due to funding issues and the lack of an infrastructure that would create a pipeline of professionals dedicated to the communication needs of the adult population. The adult system cries out for access to the expertise that SLPs provide by assessing individuals, designing a communication program tailored to the individual, training staff and families to implement the program, monitoring the program and making necessary changes as appropriate. The lack of these supports has caused immense frustration in my son, which often results in behavior that can be difficult to manage, and sometimes

can be aggressive or self abusive. I cannot imagine what it must be like for him to try to navigate his world without the ability to speak.

The adult system has been plagued by the scarcity of SLPs who are available and willing to help these folks. Funding challenges and the lack of a workforce that possesses the appropriate training have contributed to the problem.

My wife and I were encouraged by the introduction of legislation HB7922 to allow SLPs to oversee a new workforce of SLP assistants. This would be an important first step towards increasing the system's capacity to serve the need in the adult non speaking community. We wholeheartedly support this initiative.

The bill provides for a board of examiners to oversee the credentialing of these new workers. The makeup of the board includes professionals in the SLP, audiologist and otolaryngologist fields in addition to a community member who is not affiliated with those professions. Our hope is that the community member who is not a professional be a person who advocates for the adult population of people in need of speech services, or that such a person be added to the board.

Thank you again for your interest in HB7922 and in the plight of those who cannot speak for themselves. Please help us to support those individuals with the speech and language expertise that is needed to improve their quality of life.

Sincerely,
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