



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

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Testimony of Kate Ryan
To the Joint Committee on Public Health
October 20th, 2015
HB1932/SB1179: An Act supporting individuals with developmental disabilities

Good Afternoon Chairman Lewis, Chairwoman Hogan and Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you on HB1932/SB1179: An Act supporting individuals with developmental disabilities. My name is Kate Ryan and I am a Council Member of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council. The Council is federally mandated to educate policy makers on both the state and federal level about the intent of legislation and its' impact on people with Developmental Disabilities. In addition, the Council works to improve the system of supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by bringing together lawmakers with advocates to make sure people with developmental disabilities are included in decisions about public policy.

Massachusetts is a great state, (I actually think it is the best state) to live in if you have a disability, because our health care is wonderful and our state health system ensures that everyone can receive care no matter what their income is. This is crucial as the majority of autistic adults are either unemployed or under-employed. However, once we find a doctor, they may still not know anything about Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). This can make it hard to get your more pressing needs met. When you just want relief from the flu or a broken bone fixed, you do not want to deal with explaining what autism means to nurses or doctors.

I believe that our society still subscribes primarily to the medical model, and not the social model, of disability, and the fact that there is a lot of misinformation out there about ASDs, doctors and other medical personnel may not know much or they may be misinformed about what being autistic means. They may not understand how a person can be verbal sometimes and non-verbal other times. They may not know anything about the sensory problems autistics deal with.



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The Boards of Registration provide licensures to physicians, physician assistants, dieticians, nutritionists, nurses, dental professionals, mental health providers and human service providers to practice in Massachusetts. If passed, H 1932/S 1179 would require these professionals before being licensed to provide care in Massachusetts to receive training on how to address the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The bill would also require the Office of Health Equity within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, to evaluate access to medical care, unmet mental health needs, discrimination, relationships with community support specialists, and how the numbers of trained medical providers of individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities can be increased. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services will use this information to formulate rules and regulations that are designed to reduce the impact of health care disparities on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This bill will have limited cost impact on the state.

The training combined with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services evaluation will ensure that people with ASDs and other intellectual disabilities receive correct health care from the start, preventing other, more serious and costly, problems down the line. This is why I ask you to please support this bill.

In summary, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council believes that HB 1932/SB 1179 will have a positive impact on people with disabilities if it is passed. We appreciate the opportunity to educate Committee members about the bill and welcome the opportunity to schedule a follow up meeting with members if additional questions arise.

Sincerely,
Kate Ryan
Council Member
The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council