



Agudath
Israel
of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

NATIONAL OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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Rabbi A.D. Motzen
State Policy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Texas Senate Education Committee

FROM: Rabbi A. D. Motzen, State Policy Director, Agudath Israel of America
Hand delivered by Rabbi Eliezer Langer, Congregation Tiferet Israel, Austin

RE: SB 1000 Autism Services Accessibility Program

DATE: Tuesday, March 27, 2007

As you prepare this week to decide the fate of thousands of Texas children diagnosed with autism, I ask that you consider our unique perspective.

Educating a child with autism is a difficult and expensive task and one that requires flexibility and adaptability. A child with disabilities needs to be educated in the most appropriate setting for *that* child. In some cases, the most appropriate placement, whether for educational, social, or safety reasons, is an out-of-district public or even a non-public school.

Observant Jews place a high value on education with both an academic angle and moral values. Despite the high cost of parochial school tuition and a large average family size, observant Jews make the necessary sacrifices to provide their children with an appropriate education reflecting the values of the home. However, when it comes to children with autism, the additional cost is simply far too great to bear. These parents often send their children to public schools, but sometimes over the objection of the child. These children with special needs yearn to attend the same schools as their siblings and be in a classroom with their cultural peers where the children share similar food, similar culture, and similar extra-curricular activities. With children diagnosed with autism it is even more critical that their surroundings be familiar and comfortable.

SB 1000 will provide parents with much-needed flexibility as they seek to educate their children with autism. It is beyond doubt that educational excellence is directly linked to parental involvement. And there is no more fundamental, no more effective, form of parental involvement than allowing parents to choose the most appropriate form of education for their children – public, or private.

Therefore, Agudath Israel is a proponent of SB 1000 and urges you to support it wholeheartedly.