Senator Robyn Kennedy, Chair September 9, 2025

Representative Jay Livingstone, Chair

Senator Liz Miranda, Vice Chair

Representative Judith Garcia, Vice Chair

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Massachusetts State House

Boston, MA 02133

**RE: H.242/S.149*,* An Act to Enhance Standards of Care for Those with Autism and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.**

To the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities,

My name is Josh Gladstone, and I am the Disability Policy Specialist at the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC), where our mission is to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) and families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion.

This piece of legislation is a priority to the MDDC and individuals with developmental and other disabilities throughout Massachusetts.

People with DD often have many complex health needs and require medical services in the healthcare system to keep them healthy.1 It is imperative for all members of the Massachusetts community, including those with disabilities, to be able to access the care they need to live long, healthy lives within the community, and to have healthcare providers who are able to fully meet and support these needs.

Too many doctors believe the lives of people with disabilities are not as good as people without disabilities.2 When asked, 82% of physicians said they view people with disabilities as having a worse quality of life, and research shows that ***only*** around 40% of physicians felt “very confident” in their ability to provide the same quality of care to patients with disabilities as compared to those without.2-5 This reality leads to people with IDD and their caregivers that advocate on their behalf feeling like they are not listened to or respected when accessing healthcare.6-7

Beyond attitudinal obstacles, people with IDD across the U.S. are reported to be 4 times more likely to experience worse health outcomes compared to those without.1 As Massachusetts prides itself on being leaders in both healthcare and supporting its communities in need, this legislation is a powerful step towards ensuring such standards are met with a focus on better preparing providers to support individuals with disabilities.

This legislation is important as it strives to develop and implement a statewide plan that includes training and continuing education standards for healthcare professionals to be more aware of how to best diagnose and treat their patients with disabilities. This legislation would also ensure that such training and state plan are adequality accommodating and serving those with disabilities by placing an advisory committee comprised of state officials, providers, organizations like the Arc, and most importantly, self-advocates themselves, to offer their perspectives.

We know that people with disabilities can live full and meaningful lives. Having a disability does not determine your quality of life, and it is important for all people to feel comfortable with their doctors and receive good care so they can be as healthy and productive as possible.8,9

The MDDC believes that this legislation would benefit people with developmental and other disabilities throughout Massachusetts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Josh Gladstone

Sources:

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