

8/8/06

Chair of Public Education, Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I've been asked to write this letter to explain my position as a parent of an autistic child who has decided not to move to Texas due to the fact Texas does not have autism scholarships or similar funding. We have used an autism scholarship here in Ohio since March 2006 for our son, Gus.

My husband and I visited Dallas in December of 2005 to visit family and the bug to move to Texas hit during that visit. My husband grew up in Garland and we have many family & friends in the Dallas area. Our jobs are flexible and can go anywhere so we started seriously considering a move to Dallas to be closer to family. Our biggest concern about a move was to consider what services and funding would be available in Dallas for our son who was diagnosed with autism in 2004. This concern led me to join an online parent support group based in Dallas for parents of autistic children. Through numerous conversations with parents in Dallas, we made the decision not to move based on the fact Dallas does not have autism scholarships and funding from other sources appeared to have wait-lists years long.

The autism scholarship in Ohio provides us with \$20,000 to pay for specialized therapy, preschool in a school specifically for autistic children and even towards home care providers. It requires only authorized providers be able to use the funds, however, we have found all services that we need through one authorized provider, Helping Hands Center. This school provides one-on-one ABA-type instruction, social skills classrooms, pre-K classes, and specialized services available for after-school such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and music therapy. All services and all staff are trained and experienced with autistic children. The tuition for this school is \$14,000 per year. Summer programming and after-school therapies are additional. We can also register home care providers through the school who can work with our home ABA program. This therapy is also very expensive with therapists getting paid approximately \$12/hr and recommended therapy being 30-40 hours/week. Even with our income in the middle to high middle income range, meeting these expenses would be impossible without the autism scholarship.

Before putting Gus into a specialized school for autistic children, we had placed him in our city's public school district in their special needs preschool. He seemed to enjoy his routine; however, he spent more time on the bus than in class and his teachers were not experienced with autism. We received calls weekly to come pick him up from school because he would have behavioral "meltdowns" at school and the teachers did not know how to handle him. In 6 months, we have yet to receive such a call from his new school. They work with him on an individual basis and gear his learning towards his needs. If

he's having a meltdown, his teacher can do what he/she needs to do to calm him down and get him back on task. This is impossible in a traditional classroom where a teacher may have 6-8 other students in his/her care.

Early treatment and appropriate intervention is key and for most parents, the costs are astronomical and, in most cases, impossible to reach without a scholarship. Autism is complex and individualized and most likely requires treatment from professionals specially trained in multiple specialties. As a parent, we all want what's best for our child...even if it seems impossible. Not a day goes by that I don't think about my son's future, and wonder if I'm doing the best and all I can to provide for him and help him to reach his fullest potential. I am so thankful to the Ohio state Legislature for recognizing and understanding this need for the families in Ohio. Please help support autism scholarships so my fellow parents in Texas who have children with autism can be given the same opportunities we in Ohio are given today. I will follow this issue closely and I look forward to the day when we can move to Texas, where we should be, so we can be closer to our family and friends.

Sincerely,

Michelle K. [REDACTED]

Angela H [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

October 9, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

Although we am not in your district, we would like the opportunity to have some input about Autism Education Scholarships.

As a side note, although I don't believe we've ever been officially introduced, we know your parents fairly well, as we are good friends with [REDACTED], and we live a couple of houses down from your brother [REDACTED]. You may remember us as the couple who had "his and hers" Breast Cancer a few years ago – there was a story in the Texas Jewish Post about us and the Dallas Morning News, as well. Thank goodness we're doing well in that regard.

We have a 3 y/o son, Shmuli, who has autism spectrum disorder. Because there were no options in the Jewish community for educating our child with autism, we reluctantly entered the public school system in the spring of last year. Without going into too much detail (although I have plenty of details, should you be interested in reading or hearing about it for the sake of general education reform), I will simply say that it has been an absolute nightmare for us and our child. The bottom line is this – the DISD, and I would venture to say that most public school systems in Texas, DO NOT HAVE APPROPRIATE programs for children with autism. Furthermore, our experience has been that the DISD blatantly disregards the IDEA laws and has put our son into peril. We have many, many complaints, and do not believe that we will be able to continue in public schools.

It infuriates us that we have been paying taxes in this county for years and years, and that our school district cannot meet the needs of our child. Our property taxes continue to skyrocket, as do our health care and utility costs, and are options for education (from a financial standpoint), are extremely limited. As far as we can see in our neighborhood (with the exception of your brother!), are houses in the \$300K to \$1M+ - all residents paying exorbitant property taxes, and very few who are using the public schools, for obvious reasons. Our school district is failing, and the services for children with disabilities are deplorable. Again, if you want details, I'd be happy to provide them. The bottom line is this – we believe that the school district(s) should give US the funds they receive to educate our children, so that we can put it to appropriate use.

Our young child is in a "critical developmental window" (between the ages of 3-5), and he is in no way receiving the services he requires in the public school system. Options for private education for our child range in the \$800-\$4,000 month range. It is only appropriate that the state allow US access to the funds they receive to educate our child, and let us apply it to appropriate programs.

Please consider the viability and NEED for an Autism Voucher. The families of children with autism are desperate for educational options.

If you would like to discuss our particular situation further, we would welcome your call.

Thank you for your consideration,

Angela & David [REDACTED]

From: Traci [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarship Letter From Traci [REDACTED] & Family**
Date: October 9, 2006 5:52:24 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

October 10, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

We would like to send our autistic son, Austin, to a private school designed to assist children with autism. However, we can not afford the tuition. We made this decision because we have had problems in the past with the public school system. One such problem was that my daughter was two grade levels behind, and the school she was attending really did not seem to care. They graduated her to the next grade, knowing that she was not ready for that next grade level.

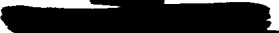


I am afraid that if we place our autistic son in the same public school, that he might not get the educational benefits that he requires. If I had problems with my non-special needs child, what will happen to my autistic son, Austin?

The autism educational scholarships would not only benefit my son, but other families with autistic children, as well.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education

scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Track 


Princeton, TX 


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October 10, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

Re: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am writing to express my heartfelt thanks for the support you have given thus far to educational scholarships for autism in our state. As a parent of a young child with autism, I feel such incredible relief and gratitude to you for seeking to help provide educational choice to children whose very futures depend on it.

As a resident in the Plano Independent School District, I have learned the hard way that the current educational programming offered in my district's Early Childhood Schools is not able to adequately meet the needs of many of our young children with autism. While the standard program may meet the basic needs of some children with disabilities, it is not realistic to expect our public school system to be able to adequately address the needs of each and every child who qualifies for services with a disability. This is particularly applicable when it comes to children with autism, whose needs are so diverse and individual. P.I.S.D.'s program has not only proven to be inappropriate for our child, it has harmed him immeasurably by restricting his access to typically developing children and denying appropriate services to him during these critical formative pre-school years. Despite pleading with our school district to consider a regular classroom placement for our child, as each school is obligated to do under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), school administrators have simply refused because such a placement does not exist within the public school system in Plano in its Early Childhood Schools.

Instead, P.I.S.D. has spent thousands of dollars, far more than it would cost to cover three full years of our son's private preschool education in an appropriate setting, fighting to deny him this legal right under IDEA. As a family, not only have we had to endure the crisis of facing our son's autism diagnosis, entirely fund his special education, and shoulder tremendous legal costs in an attempt to ensure his right to a free and appropriate public education is not violated, but we have suffered great additional strain from having to invest the time and energy, not to mention very stretched financial resources, into this arduous battle. However, the fight is worth it to us, rather than just paying for his private education and giving up on the system. We believe the public education system can be vastly improved for these children. But no one is requiring the schools to comply with even the most basic of requirements under IDEA, and the schools would rather fight than face the changes that are so desperately needed for our children.

Page Two
Senator Shapiro
Educational Scholarships

As a result, school resources and staff time, instead of going to help the children, are being squandered to fight parents, most of whom have very legitimate concerns, and these parents, already under a tremendous amount of strain, are stressed beyond the point of reason in fighting for the basic needs of their children. We fight insurance providers to get any help for our children, we struggle to overcome the overwhelming daily challenges raising a child with this disability creates, we face pediatricians refusing to treat our children due to us having to seek out experimental treatments because so little research is being done, and then we must fight our public schools.

The autism community is a hearty bunch, and we are determined and impassioned. We will continue to fight for our children as long as it takes. But all this fighting is taking a toll on us and our children. Last week I found out I have cancer. I am 37 years old, and this endless fighting for the last three years has cost me dearly. There is no doubt in my mind this battle with my school district is the main stressor in my life and the source of my illness. Please help us win this one battle to provide educational choice to the parents of children with autism when we are facing so many other challenges and losses. It will make such a difference in our lives.

As you must be aware, Congressman Barton has recently pulled a fast one on our community by keeping the Combating Autism Act from reaching the House floor. Due to his self-serving political agenda, he has pulled the rug out from under us after finally receiving a glimmer of hope of government making a meaningful contribution to the fight to combat autism. This is a truly shameful reflection upon our great state. You, Senator Shapiro, have the opportunity to show the country that not all Texas politicians are heartless, and that the autism community truly does matter, by seeing that educational scholarships are brought to our community. Our children and families need help now. Educational scholarships are a way to accomplish this and, perhaps most importantly, a way to do so quickly. Our community is strong and, sadly, growing daily. We will never forget those who partner with us in this fight. Please help us win this one.

God bless you,

Emily [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Plano, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(*Please redact all personal information prior to submission to the public record.)

October 10, 2006

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chairman, Committee on Education
The Texas Senate
Austin, Texas 78711

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Dear Madam Chairwoman,

I am the mother of Charles, an adorable 8 year old boy with autism. I am writing to you today to ask the Committee on Education to create legislation offering Texas families school choice for students with autism.

Although we have worked hard to advocate for Charles in the public school system, his unique needs have often been unmet. The process of re-ARDing and obtaining resources or specialized training for teachers can be so unwieldy and unreliable, we twice opted to pull him out of public school and place him in private schools in order to address his challenging behavioral problems immediately and before they became habitual. During my son's times in private schools, I was able to see just how much and how fast he was able to learn. The skills he acquired improved his quality of life and his progress gave me hope for his future. I believe my son will be capable of living relatively independently if he is given access to educational opportunities which are best for him.

The autism spectrum is a broad one, and the educational needs of this population of individuals are complex and varied. Because of the challenges in educating individuals with autism in public school settings, other states have developed special education legislation providing parents choices in how their special needs children are educated. I urge you create legislation offering Texas families the same type of school choice as offered in Ohio's Autism Scholarship Program.

Thank you for your service on the Education Committee and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Geraldine [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] • Houston, TX [REDACTED] • [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: letter
Date: October 12, 2006 9:41:30 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

3 Attachments, 144 KB Save Slideshow

Dear Senator Shapiro,
You are a respected, determined, genuine representative of our wonderful state of Texas. Thank you for truly caring for the people of Texas, ALL the people of Texas.... so I'm writing this to show our family's support of bringing school choice and autism scholarships to Texas. My precious first born son, Sam, has Asperger's Syndrome and every day of his little life has been a struggle... trying to communicate, trying to feel comfortable in his own skin with all of his sensory issues, trying to understand the loud and unpredictable world around him... and now, in Kindergarten, trying to learn the "basics" of the social world like saying Hi when someone says hello to him, sitting next to another child at the art table, walking in a line to recess- things that should come "naturally" but are hard for him. Unfortunately, our home elementary school, and our district, could not provide specifically what our son needed to get the most quality and appropriate education to help him grow and develop. So, we searched and prayed and finally were able to find a wonderful private school for him that caters to kids with learning differences, with 7 children in his class and 2 teachers, and a nice tuition of \$15,000 for the school year. This price tag is steep, especially because we also pay approximately \$40,000 per year out of pocket for physical, speech, and occupational therapies, an auditory training program, Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy, music therapy, play therapy, and vitamins, supplements, and medication. Of course, we would do ANYTHING for our child to help him grow, improve his quality of life, and be successful- this is the same story for every other family affected with autism. I have friends in the autism community that have taken on second jobs, sold their houses, begged family and friends for money, taken out 2nd mortgages, blown through savings accounts and inheritances to pay for therapies and school for their sons and daughters

I am telling you this because our community and state desperately needs help, and offering school choice and autism scholarships in Texas would be a great step to help the thousands of families struggling with this disorder. Thank you for listening to Sam's story, and I thank you for supporting our state of ALL people, and mostly for helping to make Texas a better place for our wonderful son to learn and grow in.

Respectfully,
Angie [REDACTED]
Allen, TX

You have been sent 3 pictures.

IMG_1665.JPG
IMG_1208.jpg
IMG_3470.JPG

These pictures were sent with Picasa, from G [REDACTED]

DO NOT
POST
PICTURE

From: "Patricia" [REDACTED]
Subject: **Jeffrey's Discovery (a school for autistic children)**
Date: October 12, 2006 9:42:53 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
1 Attachment, 5.5 KB Save Slideshow

To Whom ever it may concern,

Please give vouchers to children who need them for schools such as ours. There are so many children with autism who need the intervention that only a specialized school can give them and parents can not afford this type of education of 1 on 1.

Thank you,

Patricia [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Burleson, TX. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **RE: Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: October 10, 2006 12:42:57 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

October 10, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I would like to voice my support for the Autism Education Scholarship Program. I am the parent of a child on the autism spectrum and I have been homeschooling him for the past seven years because of our local public school's unwillingness to meet his needs. There are currently only a limited number of private schools that could meet his needs, none of which are located close enough and for a price that was affordable to our family. Therefore, homeschooling has been our only choice.

I feel the voucher system would accomplish two very important things. First, the element of competition would make public school administrators more willing to meet the needs of children with autism. Two of the things that I wanted for my son would have been free and effortless but the school was unwilling to allow it. He wanted to do his work with his favorite Lego man on his desk. They wouldn't allow it. Another thing was that I wanted to volunteer in his classroom since this would have greatly eased his anxiety, but they had a rule against a parent volunteering in their own child's classroom. These are just two small examples, but you can probably see how difficult it is to deal with a system that works in such a monopolistic environment. (Just in case you are wondering, this elementary school has been ranked exemplary every year of it's 13 year existence.)

The other thing that the Autism Education Scholarship Program might accomplish eventually, would be more consolidation of various types of autistic children in various private schools. As you are aware, kids across the autism spectrum have incredibly varied needs. It would be impossible for all schools to be able to meet the needs of all these children. The vouchers would create more private schools, hopefully ending up with schools that specialize within the autism arena.

I believe the voucher program would enable many more autistic children to gain an education and valuable skills. I do not want to see a Texas with a generation of unskilled, untrained, and uneducated autistic adults that need to be cared for.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Andrea [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The Honorable Senator Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Suite 494
Plano, Texas 75024

August 28, 2006

Dear Senator Shapiro,

I am writing in support of a scholarship system for students with autism. I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. As a teacher of a classroom for children with autism in Frisco Independent School District, I face the challenge of meeting the exceptional needs of each of my students on a daily basis. I have been fortunate to have had intensive training in effective methodologies for instructing this population of students but such training is elusive to many educators in the public school systems in the state. Even with training, the challenges are not easily met within the time and budget constraints with which the Texas teachers are faced.

Nine years ago, I began teaching children with autism with the intention to break down some of the economic barriers that families with autism face. My aspiration has always been to help any child with autism that has an educational need have the opportunity to reach his potential regardless of his family's ability to implement a private, consultant directed program in his home. The financial burden of such programs is great and unthinkable for many families. It is still my hope that this may be accomplished in the public school system in the not so distant future. In order for that to occur, teachers need to have intensive, ongoing training in those empirically based practices which have been proven effective with this population of students. The field needs to be able to attract highly qualified professionals and, of course, there must be sufficient funding to support these initiatives. Unfortunately for our students, this is proving to be a long, arduous process.

I will continue to strive to help to meet the goal of bettering the public school system for our students with autism; however, I see a need for additional support for today's students while we endeavor to improve the current school system. I believe that autism scholarships would meet this need and I would like to see them brought to the state.

Without the appropriate interventions for our children while they are young, they, their families and the state of Texas will face a grim reality, as they become adults without means to become productive, contributing members to the communities in which they live. The elected leaders must look into the future and make decisions to positively impact the lives of those touched by autism. I have seen the difference that effective programming can make in a child's life and autism scholarships will enable students with the necessary educational opportunities to reach their potential.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Blake [REDACTED]
Special Education Teacher

[REDACTED]
Frisco, Texas

August 30, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am writing in support of autism scholarships in Texas. I am sure that you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child.

Having worked with children with autism spectrum disorders for over 9 years, I have witnessed first-hand the lack of training that many individuals working with these children have been provided. Furthermore, the economic burden that many parents must endure and even more families cannot afford prohibits our children from receiving much needed suitable interventions. Students in Texas who have autism are not receiving a free and appropriate education.

I previously taught at a private school in Sarasota, Florida and have seen autism scholarships used effectively. These scholarships allowed for the teaching to be more individualized and provided the parents with additional educational options. These scholarships enable parents, who best know their child, to have a greater input in their child's education.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers. It is simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Very Truly Yours,

Kimberly [REDACTED]

Special Education Teacher [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Frisco, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

August 5, 2006

Senator Judith Zaffirini

District 21

Capitol Office: CAP 1E.12
Capitol Address: P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711
Capitol Phone: (512) 463-0121

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Zaffirini:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a grandparent and guardian of a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Linda [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Alvin, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Honorable Shapiro-

9/15/06

My son, Eric [REDACTED] is 8 years old, non-verbal and has Autism. Eric has unique learning disabilities and requires one-on-one attention and learning style. The local public school was not a fit for my son for the lack of expert help needed for his needs.

I have to home school him with the help of private therapists and consultants. The cost is at \$90/hr per consultant and a \$20/hr per therapist.

I support any scholarship or tax deduction that would help defray the costs for parents who have very little options in educating their children.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Gina [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Houston, TX [REDACTED]

September 18, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro-Chair of the Public Education Committee
RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Shapiro,

I am writing as the parent of a child with autism, and as a tax payer. We have had our child in public school for three years now. Prior to that, we had her enrolled in a private program where she received a rigorous and structured educational program, which was a behavioral paradigm called ABA, or Applied Behavior Analysis. Not only did my child make progress in the private setting, she exceeded all expectations. She became verbal, developed fine and gross motor skills, and most of her problematic behaviors were extinguished. She was even learning to read.

The only reason we enrolled our daughter in public school was for lack of funds to continue her private program. It has been a struggle to deal with the public school system. Most mainstream public school teachers are at a loss for how to deal with the very complex nature of autism. Even those that attend regular training programs fall short. My daughter, who was making such remarkable progress in a private setting, lost academic skills at an alarming rate, and developed a whole new set of behavioral "issues" once enrolled in public school. Each year, my child's Individual Education Plan included targeted skills to bring her back to where she was academically upon leaving our private program. Each year she failed to master, or re-acquire, the skills that she demonstrated in the private setting.

When we came to the school to observe our daughter's education, we were surprised to find her at the back of the classroom, unattended, with earphones on her head. She was supposedly listening to a story on the computer. For a child at my daughter's functional level, this was laughable. This was not an isolated incident, unfortunately.

We repeatedly requested, then begged, our public school to provide specialized training for the teachers that were involved in our daughter's educational process. After two years, they finally did. By that time, we had made the decision to move to another school district. Though overall we have found our new district to be more involved and infinitely more serious about our IEP goals, I am the frequent recipient of phone calls from the teacher, asking me how to handle any given situation or behavior demonstrated by my daughter.

Educating children with autism requires expertise. Putting a child with an autism spectrum disorder in a public school setting with inadequate supports and poorly trained staff is akin to treating a malignant tumor in an auto body shop. I know this sounds like a comical and extreme analogy, but unfortunately in most cases it is true.

Because of this complexity several states have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. It is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families of children with autism, and in the state of Texas in general.

Please consider the cost of an effective education today- where the results could be a functional adult citizen vs. a costly future of constant care and possible institutionalization. The costs are staggering.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for supporting my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Aliza [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Katy, Texas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Sonya [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: September 4, 2006 11:33:06 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9-5-06

Senator Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Thank you,

Sonya [REDACTED]
Fort Worth, Tx [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] Stacy L. [REDACTED]
Subject: letter to senator
Date: September 7, 2006 11:10:48 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9/7/06

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Stacy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Galveston, TX [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Valerie [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism Education Scholarships
Date: September 4, 2006 10:09:40 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

September 4, 2006

>
>Senator
>
>Austin, TX
>
>Autism Education Scholarships
>
>Honorable
>

>I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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>
>Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

>
>Valerie [REDACTED]
>

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From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Letter for Wednesday... Is This Correct?
Date: September 4, 2006 6:32:44 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Public Education Committee members-
Chair: Senator Florence Shapiro
Vice-Chair: Senator Royce West

Members:
Senator Kip Averitt
Senator Kyle Janek
Senator Steve Ogden
Senator Todd Staples
Senator Leticia Van de Putte
Senator Tommy Williams
Senator Judith Zaffirini

September 4, 2006

Senator's

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

I am the mother of a 6 year old autistic child. Since my son's diagnosis, my husband and myself have spent upwards of \$75,000. (In a year and a half) While most of this money has gone to Board Certified Behavior Analysts (consultants) and Applied Behavioral Analysis Therapists for in-home 1:1 therapies, quite a large chunk has had to be channeled into private schooling with in-school "shadows". (ABA Therapists acting as "personal assistants" to aide in immediate correction of inappropriate social behaviors, freeing the teacher in the classroom to teach, and my son to integrate into a regular classroom setting with typically developing peers as role models) While I'd love to be able to have my son integrate into a public school classroom, the law does not allow me to hire the public school shadows (paid for by my tax dollars) to participate in at home "team meetings", attended by all of his therapists and the consultant, to generalize his program across the span of the entire day. Neither am I allowed to hire a personal shadow for him to go to the public school and assist/ gather information about what problems we may need to work on at home/ liason, etc. Unfortunately, that leaves me not only paying for the shadow, but also a school. A scholarship would be an ideal way for our cash hemorrhaging family to cope. I appreciate any help you can offer to the families of autistic children in the Great State of Texas.

Sincerely,

Michele D. [REDACTED]

Arlington, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Sandy [REDACTED]
Subject: autism letter
Date: September 4, 2006 9:29:42 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Senator Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sandy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Irving, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

August 3, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
PO Box 12068 Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

RE: Autism Education Scholarships


Honorable Florence Shapiro

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Lenore 


Lubbock, TX 


September 10, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro-Chair of the Public Education Committee

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro-

On January 12, 1993, you were sworn into the Office of Senator of Texas. I have had the pleasure of meeting you in person in Austin and I appreciate your devotion to our state's education and laws. I recognize you as an expert in your field as a Senator and legislator for the state of Texas and its members.

Two years before you were sworn into Office, our youngest son, Jonathan, was sworn into a different life path: Autism. Please consider me a specialist in this area as caretaker of our son and with 5 years experience proven to know the best educational and medical methods that have helped our son to date.

My family has appreciated the public services offered to us through the State of Texas Public Education System and participated for Jonathan's first two years of education. After many attempts of working with the school's administration, the teachers and school environment were not trained and ready for Autism. We removed Jonathan from public school and enrolled him into a private education treatment center that had a proven method of teaching children with Autism.

We paid out of pocket (our savings) for his private education because we could not receive the level of education he needed in our public school. Our goal was to find the right method of teaching for Jonathan and build a capable foundation so he could learn in the public school environment.

Starting August 7, 2006, we have accomplished our goal. Jonathan is back in Allen ISD and he would not be at this stage, ready to learn, without the Private Education we invested in.

I don't see our situation as a failure on the Public Education's part. I truly felt that they were not prepared, nor may ever be, to help teach a foundation for learning to children with Autism.

I support the Autism Education Scholarship Program because it can give a family a choice of education for their child. If the Public Education is not the appropriate education plan for their child, they can have the scholarship to help get to the private education treatments that will educate their child.

Thank you,

David and Maureen [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Allen, Texas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: "GAIL [REDACTED]"
Subject: **Autism Scholarship**
Date: September 10, 2006 10:36:50 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9/10/2006

Senator Florence Shapiro-Chair of the Public Education Committee

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro-

I am the 58 year old grandmother and guardian of an 8 year old child with Autism his name is Zach. My husband (he is 60 years old) and I live in a small rural town of 1500 people with a tiny school district. I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their autistic child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I know that our grandchild Zach will outlive my husband and me (unless God has another unforeseen plan). I wish to see that Zach receives an education that will make him an independent and a productive adult member of the great state of Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current educational issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism and also the high cost it will be to the state to take care of them as they become adults. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers. Indeed the school (Wolfe City Independent School District) has tried for the last 5 years to do everything possible to educate Zach, but the problems he has with communication, social skills and behavior has proven difficult and virtually impossible for them to know what to do. Children on the Autism Spectrum are a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

I sent you a picture of our little guy, but he will not be little forever let's give him a chance to be all he can be.

Gail [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Wolfe City, Texas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: "Stephanie [REDACTED]"
Subject: [REDACTED]
Date: September 10, 2006 3:16:19 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

September 10, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro-Chair of the Public Education Committee
Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro-

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer any educational options to its citizens with autism and as a parent with older children affected by autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. My children have had to rely on me as their teacher since the fourth grade because public school was unable to meet their needs in spite of IDEA and private school was financially out-of-reach. Had scholarships been available, my children would have had many more options; not just in the private sector, but I know the influence of scholarships would have forced my public district to compete and thereby come closer to what my children needed. I believe scholarships would have a positive impact on all sectors of education and the community.

It is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or untrained teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with appropriate educational opportunities have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive (and not just a negative) impact on the future of Texas and the country.

Thank you for representing me by serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view of education scholarships for Texas students with autism.

Most Sincerely,
Stephanie [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Plano, TX [REDACTED]

From: "Dr. Lisa [REDACTED]"
Subject: **letter to Senator- AUTISM**
Date: August 4, 2006 8:24:08 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

August 4, 2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Drs. Rick [REDACTED] and Lisa [REDACTED]
Katy, TX [REDACTED]

From: Maggie [REDACTED]
Subject: **letter to senators**
Date: August 4, 2006 10:06:07 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

August 4, 2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.
Sincerely,

Maggie [REDACTED]
Mother of Tyler, 7 and Montana, 5
[REDACTED]
Austin, TX [REDACTED]

Do you Yahoo!?
Everyone is raving about the [all-new Yahoo! Mail Beta](#).

From: Carol [REDACTED]
Subject: Letter to Senator
Date: September 3, 2006 7:52:01 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
Reply-To: Carol [REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a grandmother with a grandson with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas' future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state. Please help these children look to a brighter future.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Carol [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Krum, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Carol

August 5, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. A child with autism faces many challenges in the classroom and they are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Today, the state of Texas should be leading the nation, instead of negligently lagging behind in providing an education for autistic children. The public schools are not equipped and in many cases not willing to provide the education these children need to reach their maximum potential. As a citizen of the proud state of Texas and parent with a child with autism, I am not so proud to live in Texas. I would like to see the autism scholarships brought to Texas. Our children have been neglected long enough. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today and do the right thing by passing the Autism Education Scholarship Program. . And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas. I would be happy to discuss further with you how we can make a difference together to make this happen.

Lori [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Murphy, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 11, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
Chair of the Public Education Committee
Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro:

It's impossible for my seven year old son who has autism to receive FAPE in public school. I believe that receiving an "appropriate" education is by far the most critical item to be considered in a special education setting. Being in an appropriate educational program can do far more to afford each student the greatest chance for success in school and unique educational challenges each student with autism faces in school and in their lives as adults.

These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of Texas.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,
Cynthia [REDACTED]

Richmond, TX [REDACTED]

September 13, 2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Migheon C [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Southlake, TX [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
From: Maggie [REDACTED]
Subject: letter to senators
Date: August 4, 2006 10:06:07 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

August 4, 2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.
Sincerely,

Maggie [REDACTED]
Mother of Tyler, 7 and Montana, 5
[REDACTED]
Austin, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Do you Yahoo!?
Everyone is raving about the [all-new Yahoo! Mail Beta](#).

August 4, 2006

Senator Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Shapiro,

My husband and I are the parents of an amazing four-year-old boy with autism named Reed. He, along with his two sisters, is the joy of our lives.

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism. As the parent of a child with autism, I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas' future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Tony and Susan [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Allen, Texas [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

DATE: August 5, 2006
Senator Shapiro
Austin, TX
RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Shapiro

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Jennifer [REDACTED] M.Ed, BCABA

[REDACTED]
Magnolia, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: denise [REDACTED]
Subject: Senator Florence Shapiro
Date: August 5, 2006 10:41:10 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

August 5, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Denise F. [REDACTED]
Colleyville, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Maguy [REDACTED]
Subject: Senator
Date: August 5, 2006 11:56:13 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

August 5th 2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Mr. & Mrs. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Irving, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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August 30, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Susan E. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Allen Tx [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED] letters to Senators Re: autism education ...
Date: August 5, 2006 11:09:00 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

In a message dated 8/5/2006 9:27:23 A.M. Central Daylight Time, [REDACTED] writes:

DATE August 5, 2006
Senator Shapiro
Austin, TX
RE: Autism Education Scholarships
Honorable Shapiro

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

YOUR NAME nancy [REDACTED]
YOUR ADDRESS [REDACTED] plano texas [REDACTED]
YOUR PHONE NUMBER [REDACTED]

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From: Marie [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Scholarship Letter**
Date: August 31, 2006 10:33:50 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

August 31, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Drive, Suite 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure that you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism presents to their educators. These challenges in the classroom are as different and complex as each child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states have already realized the need for more choices to educate these unique children. These states have developed specialized education legislation offering parents and educators more choices in how to educate these children. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Currently Texas does not offer the option of an autism education scholarship. This makes it much more difficult for parents and educators to develop an appropriate Individualized Education Plan for each unique child. I believe that autism education scholarships would help provide more opportunities to develop an appropriate IEP for each unique child. I believe that if parents were offered the option of an autism education scholarship, less money would be spent on special education litigation. The legislature needs to think about the long term effects of inadequately educating the autism population. You can either educate these children to become productive members of our society or you can inadequately educate these children and they will become a drain on our society. Even if the state of Texas does not offer any services to these children after they reach adulthood, they will be a drain on family members who will be left with little disposable income. The future economic impact of this should not be ignored in developing future budgets. Just as the Head Start Program has been shown to save money in the long term, I believe that autism education scholarships will be shown to save money in the long term.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism in Texas.

Sincerely,

Marie B. [REDACTED]
Plano, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

August 30, 2006 –via overnight mail

Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Written testimony for Senate Hearing on School Choice Programs – September 6, 2006

Dear Senator Shapiro:

Thank you for your continued commitment to education in Texas. We are asking for your support for School Choice Programs in Texas, and more specifically, for an Autism Education Scholarship Program.

As parents of a child with autism, we are faced with the great challenge of educating our son and meeting his special needs. These same challenges are faced by thousands of families in Texas. And where is the best place to implement our children's individualized education programs (IEPs)? For some families, it is our Texas public schools. But for other families, it is not. Therefore, Texas needs School Choice. Children with autism need an Autism Education Scholarship Program.

As you probably know, the state of Ohio's successful Autism Education Scholarship Program has recently been accepted as national model legislation. How proud parents and legislators must feel in Ohio. We ask that your Committee please take time to review the information you have received on Ohio's Program. And please consider replicating the Autism Education Scholarship Program in Texas.

Thank you in advance for your support!

Sincerely,

Kim [REDACTED]

Paul and Kim [REDACTED]

Plano, TX [REDACTED]

copy: Senator Royce West via fax
Vice Chair, Senate Education Committee

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: (no subject)
Date: September 2, 2006 12:41:43 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

I request that Texas accepts our request for school vouchers/scholarships. I am the mother of a 19 year old with an Autism Spectrum Disorder(Asperger Disorder). I homeschooled Ryan because the school district we reside in was not able to provide appropriate services. I am the founder of DANISH www.aspergerinfo.org. I have over 150 families I have worked with for the past six years. Half of them homeschool or have their children in private schools.

My son was failed by our school system and I will spend the rest of my life advocating for services for our children so that they may receive the best education possible in order to lead a meaningful life and become productive citizens.

Nancy [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Plano Texas [REDACTED]

From: julie [REDACTED]
Subject: Letter to Senator Shapiro
Date: September 3, 2006 8:00:45 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

Senator Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Julie [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: senator letter
Date: September 3, 2006 8:06:39 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Julianne [REDACTED]
Board Certified Behavior Analysts
Specializing in Early Education

[REDACTED]
Little Elm, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: edu letter
Date: September 3, 2006 8:18:24 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9-3-06

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Averitt,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum.

Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism.

Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into

consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Catherine [REDACTED]
Texas educator and mother of a child with an autistic spectrum disorder

[REDACTED]
Waco, TX
[REDACTED]

From: Darlene [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism support
Date: September 3, 2006 8:28:25 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Ms. Scillian: I am an occupational therapist working from a hospital based clinic. My first love and majority of clients are Autistic children. Not only are the improved and expanded school related issues important, but also getting control of the sensory issues prior to starting school must be addressed. As the sensory issues come under control, the children are better able to attend to the environment around them and participate in the educational process.

All of the children I work with are so overwhelmed by sensory overload caused by neurologically based sensory intergration issues he/she can not attend to the world around them. With the correct use of integrating vestibular, auditory, visual and tactile sensations, these children thrive.

I can not express deeply enough the wonder of watching a child reconnect with the world around him or her. To have a parent stand in front of you with tears in their eyes telling you that they were able to take their child to a movie or circus for the very first time and stay the entire time without melt downs or having to leave is wonderful. Just being able to go out to eat in a public restaurant or successfully having the child's hair cut without having to wrap them in a sheet first. We take so much for granted and those making the laws usually don't even know.

I want to lend my support and voice to your efforts. If there is anything else I can do to assist this cause, please feel free to e-mail or call me. Thank you so much for presenting these letters and e-mails to those in control of our laws and our country. Together we can all make a difference for these children who can not do it alone.

Thanks again.

Darlene [REDACTED]
Axtell, Texas [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: zahra [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: September 3, 2006 8:43:35 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Sunday, 3 September, 2006

Senator Royce West

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Zahra [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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August 31, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Kate [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Allen, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro,


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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]






[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]





From: David [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism Special Hearings Letters
Date: September 3, 2006 8:43:27 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
9 Attachments, 182 KB 

Dear Liz,

Thank you so much for championing this cause, our 11 year old daughter is non-verbal still in pull-ups and our family of 5 lives revolve around her needs. We have gone through personal Bankruptcy hundreds of hours of in-home ABA and continue to move on as we cannot wait for the system to change. I am attaching letters as requested and would like to be kept in the loop on any updates on this issue. We have a revolving door of Teachers and Aides that are not do not have the experience or training to be held accountable for their lack of experience. I have visited with all of my local State Senators and Representatives in person about 2 years ago and something needs to be done now. Our family appreciates your efforts, we have 2 other typical children age 12 and 8 that have also been affected by our daughters disability.

With Warm Regards,
David and Laura [REDACTED]

    
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09/03/2006

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Kip Averitt ,

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Steve Ogden

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Steve Ogden

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Judith Zaffirini

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Judith Zaffirini

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Tommy Williams

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Tommy Williams

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Royce West

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Royce West ,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Todd Staples

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Todd Staples

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

09/03/2006

Senator Leticia Van de Putte

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Leticia Van de Putte

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

David and Laura [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Roanoke, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: zahra [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: September 3, 2006 8:53:37 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Sunday, 3 September, 2006

Senator Judith Zaffirini

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Zahra
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Do you Yahoo!?
Everyone is raving about the [all-new Yahoo! Mail](#).

September 3, 2006

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX.

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum.

Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Terry [REDACTED]

Waco, Tx [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Randy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Hewitt, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX.

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sue [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Waco, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Lisa [REDACTED]

Waco, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: ruki [REDACTED]
Date: September 3, 2006 9:32:38 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

8/3/06

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Sugar Land,
[REDACTED]

All-new Yahoo! Mail - Fire up a more powerful email and get things done faster.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism letter
Date: September 3, 2006 11:33:41 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Senator Florance Shapiro

I am the grandparent of an autistic child. This child and his mother live with me and my husband. They live with me because one person can not take care of a child with severe autism. We have had to make 4 moves in the last 4 years just to find educators that know how to work with autism. In Odessa (a town with one hundred thousand people) the educators and specialist had no idea what was wrong with my gradson. (Since that time he has been diagnosed by several leading specialist in Autsim here in Dallas). We moved towards the Dallas area hoping for help and we found educators and specialist who were not informed--and thus we had to move again. We are now in Plano TX (for the past 2 years) where they recognize and understand his needs. The living cost is astronomical but we do what we have to. We despiretly need more well educatored teachers in the field on autism. With one in 166 children having autism w e need scholarships for individuals who want to work and teach these children. If we as a nation do not help these children to mature and find their nitch in life we, as tax payers, will be paying tax dollars for their care far into the future (and at a huge cost).

Mary [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Plano, TX [REDACTED]

From: Lori [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism
Date: September 3, 2006 4:56:07 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

09/03/06

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Lori [REDACTED]
Arlington, Texas [REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

Senator Kip Averitt

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum.

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And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Betty [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Waco, Tx [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 3, 2006

To,
Senator Florence Shapiro
RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Archana & Bharat [REDACTED]
Parents to Ankush [REDACTED] PISD, 7 years old
[REDACTED] Plano TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Nathan [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Letter to Sharpio**
Date: September 1, 2006 11:16:56 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9/01/06
Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships
Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program. Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas . I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas 's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas .

Nathan [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Lubbock, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Do You Yahoo!?
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From: Amanda [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism Letter to Sharpio
Date: September 1, 2006 11:13:37 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9/01/06
Senator Florence Shapiro
5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships
Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program. Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas . I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas 's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas .

Amanda [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Lubbock, TX [REDACTED]

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September 5, 2006

Senate Committee on Education
Chair: Senator Florence Shapiro
Vice-Chair: Senator Royce West
Senator Kip Averitt
Senator Kyle Janek
Senator Steve Ogden
Senator Todd Staples
Senator Leticia Van de Putte
Senator Tommy Williams
Senator Judith Zaffirini

RE: Education Committee Hearing September 6, 2006 -- Autism Education Scholarships

Dear Senators:

My name is Anita [REDACTED], and I live in Waco, Texas. I am also a parent of a child with autism. Autism is a very complex condition, and many students with autism face extremely difficult challenges that overwhelm the expertise of the educators in the public school system.

When provided with effective and appropriate educational interventions, it has been proven that people with autism can become functional and contributing members of our society, instead of spending their lives dependent on government programs. They can be a part of, instead of apart from, our community.

Several states have developed programs to address this unique situation; for example, the state of Ohio has a successful Autism Education Scholarship Program. As elected leaders, I believe that you and your colleagues need to examine the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on communities and people with autism.

This issue of school choice for students with autism isn't about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers, but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges, who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities have been shown to have tremendous potential --- and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita [REDACTED]

Anita [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Waco, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 5, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro
Texas State Capital
Austin, Texas

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Senator Shapiro:

As the parent of a child learning to deal with the autism, we have seen the challenges faced by our son, in getting an adequate education. We have also spoken to many parents in similar positions and have found that each child faces their own set of challenges that have to be addressed with an individualistic response.

We have learned that, because of this complexity, that several other states have already recognized this need, and have developed specialized education legislation, offering families a choice in how to educate their special needs child. We are told that the state of Ohio, in particular has enacted a very successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

It is time that Texas join the growing list of states that recognize the struggles facing a great number of families who must deal with this spectrum of disorders. We must look to the future and recognize the positive impact on the state if these children are given the tools which will allow them to be fully functioning members of society. A potential which, most definitely, is within their grasp.

Please push to make these Autism Education Scholarships a reality for our children. This will provide a big piece of the puzzle in helping to solve the educational challenges our children face on a daily basis.

Thanks for your time and for taking into consideration my favorable view of bringing education scholarships for students with Autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Mike [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Krum, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **for interim committee hearing**
Date: September 4, 2006 9:26:19 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

September 4, 2006

Honorable Florence Shapiro

Texas Senate

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494

Plano, Texas 75024

RE: AUTISM EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I am writing to request that you support and secure passage of legislation that offers families of children with autism a choice in how they educate their special needs child.

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity, several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program. As a parent of with a child with autism, I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas.

School choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who, when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available, have demonstrated tremendous potential. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing families like ours today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism.

Thank you for representing our views in the Texas Senate and for taking the lead to bring educational scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Lynn [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Dana [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: September 4, 2006 5:13:36 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

September 4, 2006

Senator

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Dana [REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **thank you for sending this to Senate for us.** [REDACTED]
Date: September 5, 2006 5:13:16 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
Reply-To: [REDACTED]

9/5/06

Senator _____

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable _____

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

YOUR NAME

YOUR ADDRESS [REDACTED] SAn Ant TX [REDACTED]

email [REDACTED]

phone [REDACTED]

From: Colin [REDACTED]
Subject: Autism Scholarships
Date: September 5, 2006 11:05:57 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

9/6/06

Senator Shapiro

Austin , TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas .

Colin & Janelle [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Highland Village, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Talk is cheap. Use Yahoo! Messenger to make PC-to-Phone calls. Great rates starting at 1¢/min.

Senator Florence Shapiro
Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro

My son Rodrigo is 3 years old and has autism. Rodrigo has thrived in an environment where teachers know how to best provide a meaningful learning environment for him and other children with autism. Such teachers have been properly trained in how to best provide learning opportunities for children in the spectrum. I know we have very effective public schools; I train preservice and in-service teachers at an institution of higher education. We are currently working in raising awareness of children with autism within our generalist program in order to create teachers who will eventually be able to provide the most appropriate education for our children. At this point public school teachers try their best but need more training and support. However, our children cannot wait for teachers to be trained, they need the intervention now particularly when they are first diagnosed.

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Our hope for Rodrigo is to be a self-sufficient citizen who will contribute to his community. Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Mari [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

September 6, 2006

Senator Tommy Williams

Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable

I have an eight-year-old brother with severe autism. The emotional and financial stress from his condition is very difficult on my family. These autism scholarships would give my parents the freedom to use this money for education as they see fit. Every child with autism has specific educational needs, which only the child's parents know best. The money for education should not be dictated by people who do not even know them or their needs. While I was in college I had to move from a private school to a community college so that brother could go to a private school that cost my family \$30,000 a year. On top of that, my parents were paying thousands of dollars in school taxes. I hope that we can find a way to make these scholarships possible so that we are able to give these children the best education they can get.

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a sibling with a brother with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Tiffany [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Irving, TX [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: autism education scholarships
Date: September 6, 2006 7:55:48 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

Senator
Austin, tx

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable,

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas' future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges. My son Joey is 7 years old. He was diagnosed with Autism when he was 4 years old. Each year we struggle to develop an education program that is appropriate for his needs. I believe that providing him with the most appropriate educational opportunities available he would have tremendous potential to make a positive impact on his local community and the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Jeannette [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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September 13, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro-Chair of the Public Education Committee
Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro-

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects of our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Karen [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Katy, Tx [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

October 9, 2006

Senator Shapiro
Austin, TX

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Jennifer & John [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Frisco, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: catherine [REDACTED]
Subject: autism scholarship/voucher
Date: October 9, 2006 6:29:56 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

October 10, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

CATHERINE [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
San Antonio, Tx. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: October 8, 2006 6:47:11 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

10/08/2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Robin [REDACTED] (proud mom of twin 10 year old boys who both have autism)

[REDACTED]
San Antonio, Texas 7[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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From: "mark [REDACTED]"
Subject: **Autism Education Scholarships**
Date: October 8, 2006 4:04:06 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

October 8, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Mark [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Carrollton, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

10/08/2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Kevin & Kristi [REDACTED]

4628 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

9 October 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Ann [REDACTED]

From: Stacey [REDACTED]
Date: October 9, 2006 4:13:26 PM CDT
To: tscillian@sbcglobal.net

October 9, 2006

Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Stacey [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Frisco, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: "Jen [REDACTED]"
Subject: **Re: Autism Ed. Scholarships**
Date: October 9, 2006 12:29:54 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

October 9, 2006
Senator Florence Shapiro

5000 Legacy Dr., Ste. 494
Plano, Texas 75024

RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Florence Shapiro:

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

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Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Sincerely,

Jennifer [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
San Antonio, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **School Choice**
Date: October 8, 2006 9:50:19 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

10-8-06

Senator Shapiro
Austin, TX
RE: Autism Education Scholarships

Honorable Shapiro

I am sure you are aware of the unique educational challenges each student with autism faces. These challenges in the classroom are as different and as complex as each individual child that falls on the vast autism spectrum. Because of this complexity several states in the nation have already recognized the need for and developed specialized education legislation offering families a choice in how they educate their special needs child. Ohio tops the list with their successful Autism Education Scholarship Program.

Unfortunately today, Texas does not offer this education option to its citizens with autism and as a parent with a child with autism I would like to see autism scholarships brought to Texas. I believe it is time for our elected leaders to take a hard look into the current issues and struggles facing our families today. And while doing so, they should look into Texas's future to see what the long-term effects our current limited educational system will have on the families and communities of children with autism. Only then will our leaders begin to understand that this issue of school choice for students with autism is not about poor performing schools or inadequate teachers but simply about a subset of children with complex educational challenges who when provided with most appropriate educational opportunities available have shown to have tremendous potential and therefore can make a positive impact on the future of the Lone Star state.

Thank you for serving in the Texas state legislature and for taking into consideration my view in favor of bringing education scholarships for students with autism to Texas.

Christine [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Jon [REDACTED]
Subject: **Vouchers**
Date: October 11, 2006 4:50:36 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

I have emailed Senator Shapiro expressing my strong support for school vouchers for special needs students, for whom public school often is not appropriate. As you know, this is particularly critical for parents of such students as we not only pay property taxes to support our public schools, but also private school tuition, extra medical bills, and the cost of speech and occupational therapy sessions. Personally, we spend over \$55,000 on private school tuition and medical and therapy bills.
Jon S. [REDACTED]

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From: "Jill [REDACTED]"
Subject: **Special needs vouchers**
Date: October 12, 2006 10:45:25 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
1 Attachment, 152 KB Save Slideshow

Dear Legislators:

When our daughter Rachel was diagnosed with a severe language delay, we were devastated. Here was our bright-eyed, sweet little daughter and we did not know what the future held. We turned to our local independent school system for help. They had a wide range of physical and mental needs all clumped together.

The "special ed teacher" was a person who had left the telecom industry and received a few months of broad brush K-8 special ed training. When I spoke to her, it appeared that this was a way to bide time. I was able to have a better conversation in 20 minutes in the classroom with one of her Autistic Spanish speaking students than she was.

She told me the child was non-verbal. I had just spoken with him. Spanish is NOT even my first language.

Then we discovered Oak Hill Academy. It has been perfect for Rachel. She has blossomed socially and academically.

My daughter has a future because this school exists. It is not cheap. Countless Texas children who could become productive members of society are missing out on programs like this. Extending the voucher system to special needs would

be one of the highest and best uses of this sometimes controversial program. The public system cannot be expected to be the

exports for all special needs. Private specialized schools can focus the right resources and it is good public policy to support

wider access to these programs. It is the right kind of public-private partnership.

It is my sincere hope that this measure is passed.

Thank you,
"Rachel's Mom"

Jill [REDACTED]

Jill L [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Dallas, Texas
[REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **Oak Hill - School vouchers for special needs students #2**
Date: October 12, 2006 10:35:02 AM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

I am a mother of a special needs child who attends Oak Hill Academy in Dallas, Texas. A child's education in addition to the extracurricular activities and therapies are absolutely a must for a child with deficiencies to become self-confident, secure and successful in every day life. My husband and I have 2 other children. The financial demands can be very overwhelming. However, we will sacrifice everything for the well being of our children. We have a financially good income and it is still stressful. If this voucher is passed, I believe it could open a door for so many families who feel limited to the amount of help and support they can receive due to the financial demands of an appropriate special needs curriculum. Please note, Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy are \$100 per 50 minute session. Most children require a minimum of each therapy twice a week, therefore costing a total of \$400 per week in addition to the private school tuition. Although, some insurance plans will reimburse the families with a minimal fee, the process is becoming more difficult. We appreciate and thank you for the time you are taking from the chaotic demands of your position to consider our plea.

Sincerely,

Mario A. [REDACTED]
Mrs. Kristian [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Irving, Texas [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: **voucher letter**
Date: October 12, 2006 12:51:07 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

I support school vouchers for special needs students.

Carolyn [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Lee and Carolyn [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Richardson, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

October 12, 2006

Dear Ms. Shapiro,

We are writing to express our support of school vouchers as it relates to Special Needs Children in private schools. We have two children with special needs. One of our sons attends Oak Hill Academy in Dallas, a private school for children with special needs. While we did consider our public school options, after working with our district for a length of time, it became obvious that Jacob's specific needs would be better met in a private school that had the resources and training to best serve his specific disability. Jacob is thriving in his current environment and we feel that his private school education gives Jacob the greatest chance for successful independent living. We anticipate that our other son Sam will also need to attend a private school that will best address his needs.

We ask for your support of vouchers for special needs children.

Sincerely,

Lee and Carolyn [REDACTED]

October 12, 2006

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Shapiro:

I am writing to voice my support of school vouchers for special needs students in Texas. Families with special needs kids already face large financial burdens due to the cost of private therapies and/or other medical treatments. The cost of private school tuition presents an additional financial drain on these families and is often out of reach. This is a tragedy, since there are excellent private schools that were created specifically for such children that can have a major positive impact on their lives. Unfortunately, the public schools are simply not set-up to effectively deal with the challenges these kids face.

Thank you for your support of these children and their families.

Sincerely,

W. Matthew [REDACTED]

W. Matthew [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Dallas, TX [REDACTED]

Robert & Dianna [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Richardson, Texas [REDACTED]

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas

October 12, 2006

Dear Ms. Shapiro:

Our precious son, Barrett, age 11, is the greatest gift of our lives. Barrett has Asperger's Syndrome, an Autistic Spectrum Disorder that impacts his learning style. After years of working diligently within the public school system, Plano ISD, specifically, as you are well aware, one of the finest in the nation, we came to realize that his style of learning was not one that could be best met in a public school environment. The classes were too large, the teachers too over-burdened with the challenges imposed by the TAKKS testing crisis, the pressure to excel beyond all measure, and the challenges of recapture.

Our PISD teachers were loving, dedicated individuals who struggled daily to do all they could for our son and the other children who were unable to meet the exceedingly high expectations imposed by our current school system. In fact, our special education team leader, our school aid, and our speech pathologist in the public school system, out of love for our child, all told us independently and confidentially that they could not do all they wanted for our son and that he would be better served in a private school environment.

Our state education system absolutely is leaving many, many children behind despite the rhetoric we've all heard.

We support our public school system, yet recognize that it is not the best fit for every child. Despite every effort, it was not what was best for our son. We have, at great financial cost, and at great sacrifice, placed our child in a private school with a small (10-1) student/teacher ratio, where he now is able to get the attention, the understanding, and the education he needs and deserves.

I ask that you strongly support school vouchers for children with special needs. There are thousands of other children like Barrett. Autism has become one of the

fastest growing special needs and is approaching EPIDEMIC proportions at an incidence rate of 1 in 165 children. These children need and deserve an environment where they can grow and learn in a style that is accepting and understanding of their gifts and talents. Every child deserves such an educational environment, but many parents cannot afford to make the sacrifices that we've chosen to make.

For the future of our children with special needs, who deserve the opportunity to be challenged and to learn despite their learning differences, I ask that you strongly support school vouchers.

Please don't let our special needs children be left behind.

Sincerely,

Dianna H. 

Robert C. 

Annette and Mark [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dallas, Texas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

October 12, 2006

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator,

As parents of two school-aged children with special needs, we would like to voice our support of school vouchers for special needs students in Texas.

Our children require a special needs private school education and costly therapies that are rarely covered by our health insurance policy. Our family has had to make many personal sacrifices to make our sons' needs our highest priority. We are fortunate to be able to afford and provide for all of their educational and therapeutic needs. But, we know many parents of special needs students for whom the financial strain has been crippling. And, for the children whose special needs require medical intervention, the compounded burdens to the family can lead to financial ruin.

School vouchers for special needs students would benefit many Texas families who are struggling to meet the special needs of their precious children.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter and for the work you are doing for our great state.

Sincerely,

Annette and Mark [REDACTED]

From: "DeWitt [REDACTED]"
Subject: **School vouchers for special needs students**
Date: October 12, 2006 4:54:31 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
1 Attachment, 6.9 KB Save Slideshow

October 12, 2006

Thank you for championing the cause to get state support for our special needs children. I am absolutely in support of school vouchers for this program.

Sincerely,

DeWitt [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: "Krista" [REDACTED]
Subject: **Re: School vouchers**
Date: October 12, 2006 5:47:04 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

As a parent of a special needs child I fully support school vouchers to provide my child with all alternatives for a proper education.

Sincerely,

Krista [REDACTED]

From: Leslie [REDACTED]
Subject: **Special Education Vouchers**
Date: October 12, 2006 5:36:21 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

The Honorable Forence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Shapiro,
School vouchers for special needs students would be so important for my family and other families I meet with everyday. My own son was diagnosed with a learning difference in first grade. We tried public education for 3 years. Although the school and teachers were so dedicated, the program still fell short. My son reading, writing, and math skills fell farther and farther behind. Pulling him out of the classroom for additional instruction was devastating to his self-esteem. I was lucky to find Oak Hill Academy. It was like a warm blanket for our family. They understood my son and helped our family in countless ways. For my son special education was the difference between surviving and thriving. But it had it's down side - the cost was huge! We have spent over \$50,000 on his education - and that is before college! This is not money we had. This meant second and third jobs, few family vacations, no new cars. We did without because it was the right thing to do for my son. Imagine how important a school voucher would be for my family. Now times that by hundreds! You see, I now work at Oak Hill Academy. My job is to meet with families looking into special education for their children. The needs of these children is so great. Many families leave my office knowing they have found a wonderful school for their child but they simply can not afford it. It's heartbreaking. My story is just one of many you most likely have heard. Please keep us all in mind as you research special education vouchers.

Thank You,
Leslie [REDACTED]
Admissions Director
Oak Hill Academy

From: "Christine [REDACTED]"
Subject: **Re: letter**
Date: October 12, 2006 5:26:47 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]

October 11, 2006

The Honorable Florence Shapiro
Chair, Senate Education Committee
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Ms. Shapiro,

I am the mother of a 5 year-old little girl, Ellie, who has special needs. Her problems are more neurological than physical. I support the fight for school vouchers for special needs children. My daughter has attended a private school for two years because our public schools could not provide her the individual attention and education she needs.

Sincerely,

Mary Christine [REDACTED]

Mary Christine [REDACTED]

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