

Testimony
Senate Bill 2089
House Human Services Committee
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman
March 3, 2021

Chairman Weisz and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

I am Jennifer Flores, a member of the Autism Task force and the Autism Advocacy Coalition, serving both groups with my lived experience as an Autistic individual.

I come before you today to testify to the needs for the autism voucher's proposed raised age limit to 25, inclusion of transportation and community activities, and the change to include assistance for families as well as individuals.

Age Limit

The transition period, roughly ages 16-25, from childhood into adulthood, and school to work, can be a perilous time often suddenly devoid of necessary support. Once a young person leaves the school system, a chasm opens leaving individuals and their families flailing.

Autism is defined as a Developmental Disorder, and is often marked by Developmental Delays.

With the right supports, individuals can develop necessary social, study, work, and living skills, enabling some to become happy, productive members of society.

Community Activities & Families

While there may be only one child in the family diagnosed on the autism spectrum, the diagnosis touches and impacts the entire family unit; including assistance to families is essential.

We know, through years of inclusion, how beneficial it is not only to individuals with disabilities, but also for communities, to have “different” folks, including those with Autism, fully engaged in our schools, churches, workforce, and community activities.

Autistic individuals have their own unique gifts and talents our society needs; we, as a community, are better for having folks with differences included in every aspect of life. Raising the voucher age to 25, including supports for community activities, and assisting families will help us all.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. If I can be of assistance during this time of deliberation, please contact me at jennifer@mandanmusic.com. This concludes my testimony.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Flores
Autistic Advocate