

Submitter: Alma Acuna Standish

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5526

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alma. I am a wife and Mother of 3 beautiful children . Two of which are twins with positive needs. My Daughter Ohanna was diagnosed with Autism and an intellectual disability at the age of 6. Her twin Isabella was also diagnosed at a later age with a moderate intellectual disability and severe anxiety. Our brave family has struggled to find it's grounding in this world. Trying to navigate simple daily task have become very challenging like going to the store or even a leisure activity like going to the park. Because my daughter has explosive meltdowns, we are unable to safely engage in our community in fear that she may hurt herself or others. My twins are now 15 but Ohanna is literally built like a linebacker. She is 6 foot pushing 320lbs. Now imagine a 15 yr. old girl with the mental age of a 3- 4 yr. old wanting to play at the park and begins to have a meltdown because there is no swing available. That's like a linebacker having a meltdown in a park with little ones around. Kind of scary? Yes, very. My 3 children have missed out on so many childhood activities because of their disabilities have become a safety concern, or the worry and anxiety of what could possibly happen if and when we did go out. FEATT has given our family hope. We have been able to engage in some normal activities like bowling, movies at the theater, Easter egg hunting in public. Yes, you heard me right, public! Where once we isolated our selves from the public we found a safe haven with FEATT. FEATT has provided many activities for our family and we've felt safe, heard, understood, and with out judgements. My kids have learned to feel included and accepted in our community thanks to this amazing organization. FEATT has also provided activities and other amazing opportunities for parents. For example Mom's night or Dad's night out. Where parents are able to have a bit of respite from our very stressful lives of caring for our family's with high daily needs. Truth is you truly don't know the trauma and isolation until you do and I pray no one should ever have to feel that. The reality is we are many. We just wish for our kids to have the same opportunities as every other child has . With out FEATT we would be even more isolated and excluded in our community. I hope you can do anything in your power to keep this organization alive and thriving.

Thank you ,

from a Mother with hopes for a brighter more inclusive future for all.

Alma Acuna Standish