



Autism Society of America  
6110 Executive Blvd, Suite 305  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

## **Testimony in Support of State Legislation to Prohibit Electric Shock Treatment at the Judge Rotenberg Center**

Honorable Members of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities,

I am writing on behalf of the Autism Society of America to express our unequivocal support for H180, the proposed legislation to ban the use of electric shock and other aversive treatments on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Autism Society of America is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots organization representing individuals with Autism and their families. From research and personal stories, we know that individuals with Autism are disproportionately subjected to electric shocks and other aversive treatments.

It is essential to recognize the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals, regardless of their developmental or intellectual abilities. The use of electric shock and other aversive treatment, especially on the most vulnerable members of our society, is not only ethically questionable but also a violation of their basic human rights. Such practices are not in line with modern therapeutic and educational standards and can have long-lasting psychological impacts on the recipients.

Research and evidence-based practices in the field of developmental disabilities have shown that there are more effective, humane, and ethical approaches to supporting individuals with challenging behaviors. Techniques that emphasize positive reinforcement, skill-building, and compassionate care, such as positive behavioral support (PBS), are not only more effective but also uphold the dignity and respect that every individual deserves.

Furthermore, the application of electric shock treatments, such as those used by the Judge Rottenberg Center, poses significant risks. These risks include physical harm, psychological trauma, and the potential to create an environment of fear and distress. This is counterproductive to any educational or therapeutic goals and can lead to further behavioral and emotional challenges. In fact, In March 2013, Juan Méndez, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture said that what is done to innocent people at the Judge Rotenberg Center is torture and violates the UN Convention Against Torture and other international standards.

In light of these considerations, it is our moral and ethical duty to ensure that our laws protect those who cannot always speak for themselves. Banning electric shock treatment is



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a necessary step toward ensuring a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I urge you, as elected representatives, to support this legislation. Let Massachusetts be a state that leads by example in the ethical treatment of all its citizens, particularly those who require our protection and advocacy the most.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher S. Banks".

Christopher Banks  
President/Chief Executive Officer  
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