

Testimony in support of  
**HB523 An Act to require national background checks**  
**06/08/2011**

My name is Paul Willenbrock and I am a parent/guardian and a member of the Governmental Affairs Committee of at the ARC of Massachusetts. My wife and I have been homeowners in Beverly, MA since 1974.

I am specifically speaking in strong support of **HB523 An Act to require national background checks** because of my daughter, Megan, and people like my daughter.

Megan Willenbrock is 32 with diagnoses of Mental Retardation, Seizure Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. She has severe Mental Retardation and in no way is able to speak for herself. She is defenseless. She cannot say that someone is hurting her.

The medical community has never ever been able tell my wife or me what caused her disabilities.

Yet Megan has much value. She can and does show concern for others in pain and has many ways of making people laugh.

My daughter lives in a group home and regularly attends a day Habilitation program. Over the last few years, two instances of her being abused have been reported to me from her group home. The first time, she had been dragged downstairs with no clothes on. She had severe rug burns and a bloodied lower back. The second time a staff member was forcibly holding her mouth open to brush her teeth and sitting on top of her in order to dress my daughter.

I believe that employees working with people with severe disabilities do come from other states to work in Massachusetts. Recently, for example, I noted a direct care member's car with North Carolina plates.

**HB523** will require people who are seeking employment with the Department of Developmental Services or its vendor agency programs to have a national criminal background check, one that goes beyond Massachusetts. This bill is a proactive step towards helping insure the personal safety of my daughter and people like her.

President John F. Kennedy once noted that individuals with mental Retardation were the victims of fate but should not be the victims of neglect. Passage of this important bill **HB523** will be another example of our Commonwealth not neglecting this important group of citizens.

My wife and I wish to thank Senator Fredrick Berry for his years of proactive service to people with developmental disabilities. We recognize and appreciate the overall quality of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services and in particular Shore Educational Collaborative and North Shore Residential Services.

Submitted by  
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