

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Thursday, April 17, 2014**

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### **Rep. Gobi Helps Pass Autism Bill**

*An Act relative to assisting individuals with autism and other intellectual or developmental disabilities*

BOSTON— Yesterday Rep. Anne Gobi (D-Spencer) helped pass *An Act relative to assisting individuals with autism and other intellectual or developmental disabilities*, which establishes an autism commission as a permanent entity responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations. The Commission will make recommendations and monitor the implementation policies impacting individuals with autism spectrum disorders. They will also investigate a range of services and supports necessary for individuals to achieve full potential across their lifespan. The Commission will file a report that will include recommendations for regulatory and legislative actions necessary to provide or improve services or supports. The Commission would have 34 members including 2 House and 2 Senate members, representatives from various agencies, autism organizations, and other human service related organizations. The estimated annual cost would be \$200,000.

“Establishing a framework to assist those with autism and other disabilities is something that I am proud to be part of as a legislator,” said Rep. Gobi. “I commend my colleagues for their hard work in getting this bill pushed through the House.”

The bill establishes state tax-advantaged accounts for families to utilize services for disabled family members which is administered by Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA). Funding would help cover disability- related expenses, enabling parents of children with disabilities, as well as older individuals with disabilities, to put aside money to help cover anticipated long-term costs. MEFA will promulgate regulations on or before December 31, 2014.

The bill also requires the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to revise educator licensure regulations to provide a mechanism for special education teachers to receive an Autism Endorsement. Special education teachers will gain the skills needed to support general education teachers and to provide the specifically designed instruction needed to meet the unique and complex educational needs of students with autism in the least restrictive environment. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) will no longer use an IQ-based eligibility requirement for adult services. This bill expands DDS eligibility to all people with developmental disabilities who meet conditions for “substantial functional limitations,” and provides DDS services for people diagnosed with Prader-Willi Syndrome.

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