

# **An Act to Permit the Department of Developmental Services to Provide Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities**

**House docket number**        **HD02945**  
**Senate Docket number**       **SD00777**

## **Lead sponsors**

Rep. Garrett Bradley and Senator Jennifer Flanagan, members of the Autism Commission.

## **This bill relates to one of the two highest priority recommendations from the Autism Commission.**

**Goal**                                This bill enhances the statutes that control eligibility for services by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). In January 2013, the Governor signed a new law that revised the definition of intellectual disability. That law did not address the needs of people whose functional challenges are related to a developmental disability. Some people with significant developmental disabilities, including individuals with autism spectrum diagnoses, have significant functional limitations that dramatically affect their ability to live and work independently. Currently, many of these individuals live at home with aging caregivers and are denied services from both DDS and DMH. This bill expands DDS eligibility (subject to appropriation) to all people with developmental disabilities who meet certain conditions for "substantial functional limitations". The wording is taken from the relevant federal statute, known as the DD Act. More than 40 states provide eligibility for adult services using a definition of developmental disability.

**Background**                        The Massachusetts Special Commission Relative to Autism, chaired by former Rep. Barbara L'Italien, has been meeting since December 2010. The Commission was charged with identifying gaps in services for autistic people and facilitating their participation in society to the fullest extent of their ability and desire.

**AANE role**                            The Autism Commission includes two members of the Board of Directors of the Asperger's Association of New England (AANE), and its Executive Director. Based on the Commission's draft recommendations (soon to be published), the AANE has identified two legislative priorities and established an Advocacy Committee to promote them.

**Our constituency**                This bill is supported by a large statewide constituency. It has the endorsement of the Disability Law Center (whose attorneys drafted it in consultation with AANE), the Arc of Massachusetts and the Cross Disability Advocacy Coalition, and is likely to be supported by other statewide disability organizations. These organizations have large, active memberships (20k in the case of AANE).

## **Contact**

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