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HOUSE PASSES SWEEPING LEGISLATION TO ASSIST THE AUTISM COMMUNITY AND THOSE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

(BOSTON)- Representative Danielle Gregoire (D-Marlborough) joined her colleagues in the House of Representatives yesterday in passing legislation to assist those individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities along with their families.

This legislation would encourage educators to develop teaching plans to allow children with autism to remain in regular classroom settings and enable families to save tax-free for the care of their loved ones. In addition the bill focuses on addressing employment and housing needs of individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, this bill calls for the creation of an Autism Commission within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. This commission will make recommendations and monitor the implementation of policies impacting individuals with autism spectrum disorders. In addition, they will investigate range of services and supports necessary for individuals to achieve full potential across their lifespan. Members of this 34 person commission will include representatives from various agencies, affected parents, autism organizations, and representatives of the House and Senate. Finally, this legislation will use a federal definition of developmental disabilities instead of a state rule which currently makes individuals with an IQ of 70 or higher permanently ineligible for services as adults.

“With April being Autism Awareness Month, I am thrilled to see the House of Representatives making significant strides towards bettering the lives of individuals with autism as well as their families,” said Representative Gregoire. “The Special Commission Relative to Autism established in 2010 made several recommendations and I am pleased that my colleagues have chosen to implement them to provide a better quality of life for members of our community.”

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