

ALLY

BEHAVIOR CENTERS

Changing Lives For Children With Autism

February 6, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is offered as written testimony and support of HB598 and SB469.

We are: Ally Behavior Centers, 17810 Meeting House Road, Suite 100, Sandy Springs, MD 20860

We first want to express our thanks and appreciation to Delegate Ariana Kelly and Senator Mary Washington for sponsoring these bills. By doing so, they have boldly proposed a solution to neutralize the access disparities that currently exist for ABA services. We are also appreciative to organizations like Pathfinders for Autism and other ABA providers for their continued advocacy on this issue.

If successful, the passage of this bill would prohibit the Maryland Department of Health from conditioning reimbursement of applied behavior analysis (ABA) provided to Maryland Medical Assistance Program recipients on the presence or availability of the parent or caregiver of the program recipient in the setting where ABA services are provided to the program recipient.

Private insurance companies do not mandate a parent or caregiver be present.

Background on ABA: For young children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), most struggle significantly with age-appropriate developmental milestones related to communication, life skills, school readiness and the ability to successfully interact with peers. Early intervention, full-time, center-based ABA therapy is often the recommended treatment by the developmental pediatricians and psychologists who diagnose them.

ABA therapy is delivered for 30-40 hours a week using a 1:1 therapist to child ratio, most often in a center-setting that resembles a preschool and natural play environment in the company of other children.

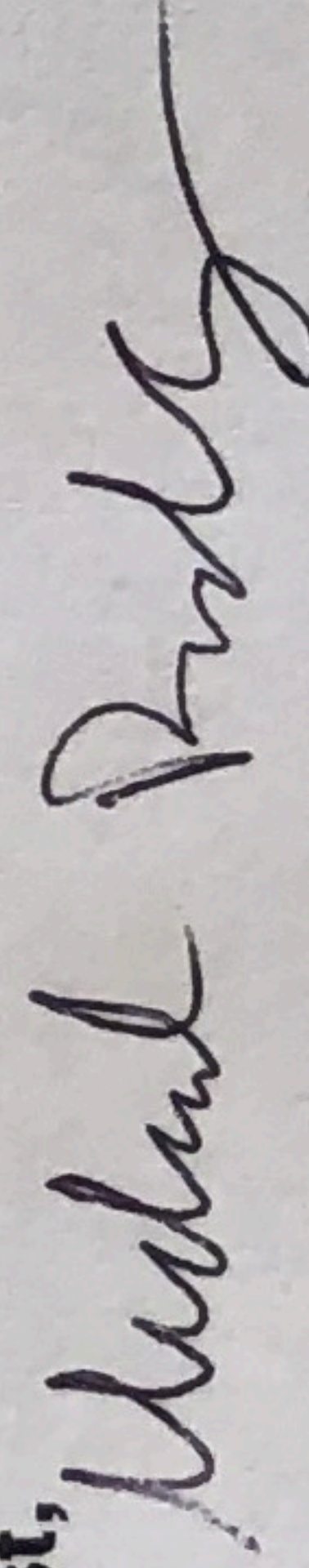
Current situation: We strongly object that center-based ABA therapy is not accessible to Maryland Medical Assistance Program recipients because reimbursement requires a parent or caregiver be present. **Having parents or caregivers present would violate HIPPA rights for our other clients therefore we are unable to offer our services to anyone but those who have private insurance or are self pay.**

This is discriminating and exacerbates socio-economic regression, making self-improvement and the hope of moving towards financial independence from public programming a less realistic goal for many. We are supporting the passage of these bills to make life easier for parents with a child in need of life-changing treatment for autism, no matter what type of insurance they have.

Additional counter effects of passing this bill include giving ALL children who need this therapy, access to full-time, center-based care while parents have the freedom to be contributing members of society, earn a living, care for themselves, care for others or whatever it is they need to attend to during their children's full-time therapy. Reimbursement of services should not depend on a parent or caregiver being present.

HB598 and SB469 are common-sense solutions to a rule that prevents equal access to care. Please accept this as our support for an obstacle-free future where everyone can access the care they need.

Best,



Michael B. Rudy
Founder & CEO
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