



**HB 598 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program –  
Applied Behavioral Analysis Services - Reimbursement**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**February 9, 2021**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**The Maryland Coalition of Families:** Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for someone with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to parents and caregivers of young people with mental health issues and to any loved one who cares for someone with a substance use or gambling issue.

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MCF strongly supports HB 598.

A number of the families that MCF works with have a child with co-occurring mental health and autism spectrum disorders. For children with autism, Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy is generally considered the gold standard. Accessing ABA services, however, has been impossible for some families. While ABA has been a Medicaid-reimbursable service in Maryland for a number of years, it can be nearly impossible to find a Medicaid provider. We have heard many stories from distressed families about their total inability to access ABA services.

The requirement that a parent/caregiver be present at the location where ABA services are being provided has contributed to this shortage. A widespread model of providing ABA therapy is that treatment be delivered in a Center, where occupational therapy, speech therapy and general education are also offered. Since many children with autism require 20-40 hours/week of treatment, Center-based therapy is not an option for many parents/caregivers who cannot be present in a waiting room for that stretch of time - work conflicts or the demands of other children make this arrangement impossible (in addition to being incredibly burdensome). In this situation, the only way for families to access intensive ABA services for their child is through in-home services. Yet many providers favor the model of Center-based delivery of services, hence they simply do not enroll as a Medicaid provider.

HB 598 would both lighten the tremendous burden on families to be present during ABA treatment, while increasing the number of Medicaid ABA providers. Therefore we urge a favorable report.

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