

HOUSE BILL 598: Maryland Medical Assistance Program –Applied Behavior Analysis Services–Reimbursement

Health and Government Operations Committee

February 9, 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to ask the Committee to support House Bill 598 to remove the requirement under Maryland Medicaid that a parent be present with their child receiving applied behavior analysis. This requirement is not based on clinical practice and forces parents to choose between their child's medical needs and work/family demands. This choice is not a requirement of ABA services covered by private insurance in MD.

I am a single parent of three son's that were all diagnosed with autism under the age of two. My son's - Elijah age 11, Aiden age 11 and Elliott age 10 - all have different needs and personalities. They learn well in group settings with interaction from peers and support staff. They each have individual behaviors and needs and would greatly benefit from ABA services. They have been evaluated and determined to need 32 hours a week of service but were never able to access them due to limitations of Medicaid.



As toddlers, my sons all received early intervention services at the Kennedy Krieger Institute. Unfortunately, those services ended at age 5. Around the same time there were changes in Maryland Medicaid that required that ABA services be covered by Medicaid. This was spectacular news for families like mine, or so I thought! I spent over 4 years trying to access ABA services under Maryland Medicaid only to continually hit roadblocks. The primary obstacle was that there were few to no providers that accepted Medicaid. Center based services were not allowed. Our family is unique in the fact that all of my children have autism so in-home services require 4 providers to be in my home working on goals in very limited space.

My children were put on a merry-go-round of finding a provider, getting approved, evaluation and treatment plans created, and then waiting for services that never started. Time and time again the providers we found ultimately dropped Medicaid because of restrictions related to parent presence, service settings, and/or fee schedules that did not fit their service delivery model. I literally spent hundreds of hours trying to get medically necessary treatment for my sons. But despite trying incredibly hard, filing appeal after appeal, and enlisting help from Disability Rights Maryland I was unable to get any ABA services under Maryland Medicaid.

I can't express to you how painful it is to be unable to access care for your children. I saw how beneficial the treatment my children received at KKI was for their development and to know that they each missed out on years of progress is devastating. Even more devastating was that time and time again I saw other parents who had private insurance access care for their children without these same barriers. I don't believe it is fair that there are two sets of rules on how ABA services are delivered in Maryland. Requirements should not be arbitrarily imposed on patients based on the type of insurance they have. The treatment plan and setting, whether it be center or home based, should be determined by the Board Certified Behavior Analysts and by the goals written in the patient's treatment plan.

On behalf of my sons, I respectfully ask that you vote in favor of HB 598.

Respectfully,

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