

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

**Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**February 9, 2021**  
**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Pembergrass and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 598. As Licensed Behavior Analysts (LBAs) in Maryland, long-standing members of the behavior analysis community in Maryland, founding committee members of the Behavior Analysts Advisory Committee for the Maryland Department of Health, and current Legislative Committee members for the Maryland Association for Behavior Analysis, we write to highlight the importance of this proposed bill.

In 2014, we were thrilled to have the Maryland Legislature pass two important laws (the Maryland Habilitative Service Mandate and the Maryland Behavior Analyst Act) so that families of children with autism would have access to the medically necessary Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy they needed, from the clinicians trained to provide these services – Licensed Behavior Analysts. Due to the passing of these two laws, many children with autism are successfully receiving the ABA services they need. Access to ABA therapy greatly improves the chances that individuals with autism, and their families, will need less support and resources over the course of their lifetime by building the skills necessary to be as successful and independent as possible. Unfortunately, the majority of children currently benefiting from this treatment are those with private commercial insurance. There are many Maryland families with Medicaid that are not receiving the ABA therapy they need due to the prohibitive requirement that a parent must be present during all therapy time. This is not a requirement within the state mandate, nor is it a requirement by any other insurance carrier. Moreover, it is simply not possible or feasible for a family to have one parent, sometimes the only parent, sacrifice their job, so that they can be present at their child's therapy for up to 40 hours per week. This unfair disparity across families, due to the type of insurance they have, despite a state mandate, is a disservice to these children, their families, and thus, our community.

There are nearly 700 Licensed Behavior Analysts in Maryland and thousands of children with autism that need this medically necessary service. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of those LBAs are Medicaid providers and a number of others have told us that they have dropped out of the program due to the structural barriers such as the parent presence requirement. While we understand the importance of caregiver training to a child's progress and do include this in our treatments, the parent presence requirement has too many unintended negative consequences. Per a recent list of providers obtained from Optum, there are only 65 Medicaid ABA providers in the state of Maryland available to address the needs of over 4,000 children with autism. This certainly does not provide the network of providers needed to adequately provide children with Medicaid access to the care they need. This unfortunate situation is only magnified when we know that Maryland has the skilled clinicians, LBAs, to provide this medically necessary treatment for our community.

The behavior analysts in Maryland are a dedicated group of ABA providers, scientists, and academics who have been called to understand how learning happens and to create behavior change systems that can make meaningful differences for our community. We are hopeful for the chance to serve a more equitable distribution of clients, regardless of whether they have private insurance or Medicaid. ABA therapy can reach every child with autism in Maryland, if the structural systems are in place to support these children and their families.

Sincerely,

*Erin Camp*

Erin Camp, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA  
MABA Legislative Committee Chair

*Erin Schaller*

Erin Schaller, MA, BCBA, LBA  
MABA Legislative Committee Member