



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

comments for autism advisory committee

Dannene Drummond <dannedrummond@hotmail.com>

Fri, Dec 21, 2012 at 2:19 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Committee,

I am the mother of a 10 year old boy with autism. We have lived in Maryland for the last 5 years (I was also born and lived here through high school as well). The first year, Howard County Schools paid for my son to receive ABA services in our home. For the last 4 years we have had to pay out of pocket for these services. Our school system's head of special education, Patricia Daly, has told the Howard County Autism Society that ABA services will "never" be provided in this county past 2nd grade. I am very frustrated that this state seems to be so many years behind most of the other states who do provide ABA and that my child has to suffer as a result. Everywhere I look, there is money being provided for children with autism to have recreation. If I want money for my child to have swim lessons, I can find it. If I apply for LISS funding (which miraculously disappeared this year so I can't even use that anymore), they harass me for wanting to get ABA for my child. If I want to have respite, they'll happily give me the \$3000. ABA is the only scientifically proven therapy for autism. Why is it that everywhere I turn in this state, they are trying to keep my child from getting these services? I'm completely baffled when I talk to my friend who is a high-powered attorney in NYC and he says he has never spent one cent on his child's ABA services because NY provides these services. New York's department of health even put out a 107 page guide, specifically going through every autism therapy and talking about whether it was scientifically validated, and found that ABA was the only therapy that met their criteria. Why hasn't our state done that? Why have over 30 states passed legislation that forces insurance companies to cover ABA, yet our state can't even get the bill past the committees? Why does our state ignore the national standard's project, led by leading college faculty, that specifically went through all the autism therapy studies and also found ABA to be the most effective treatment for autism? All this state provides is the ability to apply for the autism waiver, then wait 10 years for your child's name to come up, when your child is almost aged out of it. We have been on the list for almost 5 years now and are nowhere close to the end of that list. In final desperation, I have spent a lot of time and money on getting certified to do the ABA myself. I sincerely hope that the members of this committee are not ethically compromised by the health insurance companies and that your decisions will be based on evidence and not financial gain. When these children become adults, this state is going to suffer serious financial repercussions for denying these children help. Please consider fixing this wrong situation and allowing my son to get the help he needs.

Sincerely,

Dannene Drummond

PS If you would like a copy of the New York Department of Health's paper, please let me know. I have a copy saved on my computer. I also have a copy of the National Standard's Project, but this can be easily found on the web.



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

FW:

Diane Mister <anna.mister@verizon.net>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Mon, Dec 31, 2012 at 10:18 AM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Name Anna D Mister

Address 5327 Kenwood Ave
City, State, Zip 21206



The
League
of
Life and
Health
Insurers
of
Maryland

200 Duke of Gloucester Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-269-1554

December 21, 2012

Marie Grant
Director, Governmental Affairs
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

SENT VIA EMAIL TO marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant:

The member companies of the League of Life and Health Insurers of Maryland, Inc. appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Autism Technical Advisory Group.

The Maryland habilitative services mandated benefit was enacted by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2000 and was codified as § 15-835 of the Insurance Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. The mandate applies to insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations (carriers). It requires carriers to provide coverage for habilitative services for a child under the age of 19. The term "habilitative services" is defined in the law to mean "services, including occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy, for the treatment of a child with a congenital or genetic birth defect to enhance the child's ability to function." Since its passage, the law has been interpreted by the legislature and regulators to require coverage of occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy services for eligible children. In fact, there have been bills seeking to mandate coverage for a broader array of services than those already mandated by § 15-833 for autism and autism spectrum disorders introduced before the Maryland General Assembly in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. None of these bills passed and there was no suggestion that the services under the proposed legislation were covered under existing law.

In evaluating what services should be viewed as medically necessary treatments for autism and autism spectrum disorder, there are several threshold questions that need to be answered. Are behavioral interventions medical interventions or educational interventions? Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, early intervention and special education programs must provide services to children with autism. While funding for the program may be inadequate, it is clear that behavioral interventions are covered for students within Maryland's public school system. This

creates a duplication of services between the educational program and the health insurance coverage that is not typically found with medical benefits.

There also remains a question as to whether behavioral interventions have risen to the level of evidence based therapies. In its work to assess the literature on treatments for children with autism spectrum disorders, the Agency for Healthcare Quality stated in its 2011 review of studies entitled "Therapies for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders" that "the strength of evidence is insufficient to provide confidence in observed improvements in cognitive outcomes with educational interventions, including the TEACCH intervention, and there is insufficient evidence for broad-based educational approaches, often based on applied behavior analysis (ABA) principles and computer-based approaches."¹

We believe it is not appropriate at this time to conclude that behavioral interventions are medical in nature and evidence based. However, if the Technical Advisory Group reaches this conclusion, how should services be reviewed? Carriers need the ability to assess the appropriateness of requested services. The ability to review services for medical necessity is the hallmark of preferred provider policies and health maintenance organization policies under a managed care system. A policy that fails to allow a carrier to require a formal diagnostic assessment before behavioral intervention is initiated, ensure treatment plans are developed and monitored by licensed and qualified mental health professionals, require certification and certain credentialing standards for technicians providing services, allow precertification of services, and review treatment for ongoing improvement, appropriate treatment goals and reasonable frequency or service would be inconsistent with the treatment of other conditions. In its 2009 report on Mandated Benefits, the Maryland Health Care Commission observed, regarding Applied Behavioral Analysis specifically, "ABA can be treatment-oriented or educationally oriented, depending on the problems it targets. ABA that focuses on helping a child learn new skills may be an educational intervention, but ABA that addresses social deficits or self-injurious behavior could be treatment oriented"² This reinforces the need for appropriate review of services and treatment goals for behavioral interventions mandated under insurance coverage.

Lastly, it is important to focus on the impact of any service the Technical Advisory Group recommends on cost. While this process is not a typical path to expanding or adding a mandate into Maryland law, it has the same effect of mandating coverage. The legislature would assess the cost of a mandate in evaluating a proposal. The Technical Advisory Group should also consider the cost of its ultimate decision. Health coverage in our state is in the midst of significant flux. It is clear that health insurance premiums are likely to rise, possibly significantly, thorough implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Any decision by this group that increases the cost of coverage

¹ See, Agency for Healthcare Quality, "Therapies for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders" April 2011, <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productid=651#2752>

² p. 5, Maryland Health Care Commission, "Annual Mandated Health Insurance Services Evaluation" December 2009

will exacerbate challenges for consumers who will struggle to afford insurance coverage in a new environment.

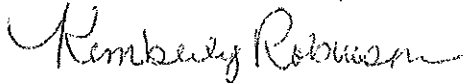
In its report, the Maryland Health Care Commission found the anticipated cost of a benefit with no limitations on annual limit or age to be as follows:

Estimated cost of mandated benefits as a percentage of average cost per group policy	0.76% to 2.17%
Estimated cost as a percentage of average wage	0.1% to 0.29%
Estimated annual per employee cost of mandated benefits for group policies	\$51 to \$145 ³

The cost of insurance impacts accessibility to health care. We believe managing cost is vital if access is to be expanded. Many states which have mandated coverage of behavioral interventions have imposed annual dollar limits and/or age caps. Advocates often point to moderate cost increases in these states. However, as annual dollar limits are prohibited under the ACA, the mitigating effect of annual dollar limits will go away. Should the Technical Advisory Group determine that behavioral interventions are medically necessary under their charge, we would suggest that an age limit be considered in an effort to manage costs of the new benefit.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts with the Technical Advisory Group. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Very Truly Yours,



Kimberly Y. Robinson

³ p. 13, Maryland Health Care Commission, "Annual Mandated Health Insurance Services Evaluation" December 2009



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Coverage

Straight Wayne <Woichi01@comcast.net>

Fri, Dec 21, 2012 at 5:20 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

If the latest talk about the attack on CT being at least in part attributable to the shooter having Asberger's Syndrome, is even remotely true, then we need to provide this kind of coverage post-haste. There is no time to waste.

Wayne J. Straight
Woichi01@comcast.net
Its the environment stupid!



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Supporting for Autism Insurance Coverage

Kristin Brown <kebler615@hotmail.com>

Fri, Dec 21, 2012 at 4:11 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

I have friends who have 2 wonderfully awesome boys, both have been diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum. Their parents have put more than 100% into getting the services they need to help their boys succeed, in school and in life.

I can only imagine how much insurance coverage would help them, as well as other families.

Respectfully,

Kristin Kopasz
6412 Eiffolk Terrace
Columbia, MD 21045



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Supporting for Autism Insurance Coverage

Kristin Brown <kebler615@hotmail.com>

Fri, Dec 21, 2012 at 4:11 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

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I can only imagine how much insurance coverage would help them, as well as other families.

Respectfully,

Kristin Kopasz
6412 Eiffolk Terrace
Columbia, MD 21045



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Recommendations for the coverage of ABA services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Maryland

Kirsty MacIver <little_redcar@yahoo.com>

Fri, Dec 21, 2012 at 12:46 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Marie,

I have attached a comprehensive document produced by the behavior analysis certification board for the purposes of guiding states as they build their regulations on insurance coverage for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders with respect to behavioral intervention services. It details the evidence behind the ABA approach, and lays out recommendations and best practice for credentialing, supervision of direct service staff, dosage of treatment and details what constitutes an ABA treatment program for students with Autism.

There is a great need for insurance coverage for behavioral intervention services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Maryland. The state has one of the only Autism Medicaid Waiver programs in the country but it leaves thousands of children underserved. As of Dec 12th 2012 (referencing data provided by MSDE at the provider training on Dec 21st) there are 876 children served by the Autism Waiver and **3874 children on the waiting list for services**. The **average waiting time for services is 8 years**. The only other children who have guaranteed coverage for habilitative behavior intervention services in Maryland are those from active and retired military families. These families receive up to \$36000 per year in covered Applied Behavior Analysis services. The CDC 2012 statistics state that 1 in 88 children has an Autism Spectrum Disorder. According the naccrra (http://naccrrapps.naccrra.org/map/publications/2012/maryland_sfs_2012_preliminary_3_20_12.pdf)

there are 661,728 families with children in Maryland. With an average of 2.3 children per family that makes an estimated 1,521,974 children in Maryland. Divide that number by 88 and you get **an estimate of up to 17,295 children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Maryland**.

Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia have all passed insurance reform to ensure that Applied Behavior Analysis is covered as an habilitative service for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Children in Maryland desperately need this insurance coverage. If insurance did cover ABA services in Maryland there would quickly be an increase in qualified providers in Maryland. At present it is difficult for ABA providers to bill sufficient hours to maintain full-time staff. This is compounded by the fact that Behavior Analysts are not included as early intervention providers through the education system in Maryland. UMBC has a master's program in behavior analysis. Many of the graduates leave Maryland upon graduation because companies are not able to employ them in full time positions. As one of the richest states in the country Maryland really needs to step up and ensure that its children with Autism start to receive the services that that so desperately need. In doing so we will ensure that there are great job options for our Maryland trained behavior analysts to remain in Maryland and practice behavior analysis.

I look forward to hearing about the date of the meeting in January.

Sincerely,

Kirsty MacIver.

Kirsty MacIver, M.S., BCBA

Little Red Car ABA Services, LLC

2003 Westchester Ave.,

Catonsville, MD 21228.

email: little_redcar@yahoo.com

cell: 443-847-7246

fax: 410-529-1158

We are now online at www.littleredcaraba.com



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 **ABA_Guidelines_for_ASD.pdf**
3912K



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage Bill

Derek <misterbigted@yahoo.com>

Fri, Dec 21, 2012 at 12:19 PM

Reply-To: Derek <misterbigted@yahoo.com>

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Derek A Mason

29 Theo Lane

Towson, MD 21204



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage

Patty Bond <pbond@jhu.edu>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 7:33 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Patricia Bond

535 Church Rd
Reisterstown, MD. 21136



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism

mom2disneygirl@gmail.com <mom2disneygirl@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 4:34 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Cc: Wingate-Gaiser Diana <dwingategaiser@gmail.com>

Please support insurance coverage for habilitative services for children with autism and autism spectrum disorders.

Our goal as parents and citizens of this great nation should be to provide the best possible care for our most cherished gifts, our children. As the Aunt of 2 remarkable young boys with Autism, I watch with amazement at the tireless caregiving they receive from their parents and grandparents. I watch their parents advocate for them and all children with autism spectrum disorders. The least the insurance industry and the rest of us as taxpayers can do is to support these services.

During this holiday season, this would be the best gift children with autism and their parents could receive.

Have a blessed holiday!
Cassandra Burke
Finksburg, MD

Sent from my iPhone

Please excuse any errors and shortness of message



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism

paulconner@mris.com <paulconner@mris.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 3:53 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Conner

150 Joanne rd.

Severna Park MD 21146

410-245-7596



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Insurance Coverage

Mary Gaiser <mgaiser@gejlaw.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 2:15 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

- Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Mary Gaiser

4 Stonegate Court, Cockeysville, MD

Mary A. Gaiser

Paralegal

TEL: 410 347 1517 / FAX: 410 468 2786

218 N Charles Street, Suite 400, Baltimore, MD 21201

mgaiser@gejlaw.com

GALLAGHER EVELIUS & JONES LLP

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Insurance Coverage

Mary Gaiser <mgaiser@gejlaw.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 2:15 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

- Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Mary Gaiser

4 Stonegate Court, Cockeysville, MD

Mary A. Gaiser

Paralegal

TEL: 410 347 1517 / FAX: 410 468 2786

218 N Charles Street, Suite 400, Baltimore, MD 21201

mgaiser@gejlaw.com

GALLAGHER EVELIUS & JONES LLP

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Insurance Coverage

PJ Shafer <PJ.Shafer@lpl.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 12:05 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I am a parent of a child with Autism. I am lucky enough to be able to pay for his services because we are wealthy. Unfortunately most families are not as lucky as mine. I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy.

Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

School systems are the ones treating our kids. The money for therapy should come from insurance companies not our school budgets.

I also sit on the Board of the Baltimore Chapter of the Autism Society. I can tell you that at each monthly support group we see families struggling to make ends meet and find ways to get services for their children. Having a child with a disability is hard enough. Finding a way to pay for treatment should not also be difficult.

Respectfully,

P.J. Shafer

12217 Worthington Road

Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

PJ Shafer, Esq.

Linda Shafer & Associates, LLC

Email: PJ.Shafer@lpl.com

Phone: 410-453-0444

Fax: 410-453-0452

9515 Deereco Road, Suite 800

Timonium, MD 21093

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Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism

Luisella McBride <sella2277@aol.com>
 To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 12:09 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

Imagine the following:

You have a beautiful healthy baby and then a few years later you hear "your child has autism."

At that very moment you have a rush of feelings- fear, uncertainty, remorse, sadness, fear of who will take care of your child when you pass away.... the list goes on and on.

Then, you hear that there is a therapy that exists that can help your child-- the closest thing to a "magic pill" to help their illness. The therapy can increase your child's chances of having an independent life, working, being able to be a part of society and NOT relying on the state or government when they become an adult.

BUT you can't afford to pay for the therapy and your insurance will not cover it, your state won't mandate that your insurance cover it, and now your state and the insurance you work so hard for to pay, are essentially telling you that your child's future does not matter.

The stress involved with not being able to afford the therapy that can SAVE your child's life is enormous! So many families face the decision of deciding whether to try and pay for the therapy on their own, while facing foreclosure on their home, not being able to afford things for their other children, not being able to enjoy family outings or vacation, not taking care of themselves because they need to take care of their VERY sick child.

NOW IMAGINE that you not only have 1 child with autism, but 2! How do you decide which child gets the therapy and how much? IF you can afford it!

MANY families in Maryland face the issues above every minute of everyday because our State and insurance companies have decided that our children do not deserve this therapy.

I am asking you to change this! I am asking you and Maryland to tell our children they matter and that their success and future is important and valuable. I am asking Maryland to help its children and citizens become active members of society and to help these families live the best lives they can.

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,
Luisella McBride
13220 Falls Road
Cockeysville MD 21030



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance coverage for children with Autism

Adrienne Gleason <gleason5@comcast.net>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 12:48 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Adrienne Gleason
Mother of an amazing 8 year old with Autism
13707 Summer Hill Drive
Phoenix, MD 21131



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

RE: Meaningful Autism Coverage in Maryland

Jennifer Montgomery <jleith@jhu.edu>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 11:20 AM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I have an 8-year-old son on the spectrum and I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. Your support would greatly be appreciated by myself and all other Maryland families.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Montgomery

399 Academy Road

Baltimore, MD 21228



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Fwd: Insurance coverage

Shannan <shanwg2@aol.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 11:19 AM

To: "Marie.grant@maryland.gov" <Marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Shannan <shanwg2@aol.com>
Date: December 20, 2012, 6:45:59 AM EST
To: "marie.grant@md.gov" <marie.grant@md.gov>
Subject: Insurance coverage

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,
Shannan Wright
6531 Pigeon Hill Rd.
Hanover, Pa 17331

Sent from my iPhone



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

Lisa Murphy <lmurphy608@yahoo.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 11:06 AM

Reply-To: Lisa Murphy <lmurphy608@yahoo.com>

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Lisa Murphy

3806 Pleasant Place

Baltimore Md 21211



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

Tracy Wayman <twayman@jhu.edu>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 11:06 AM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

- Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Tracy Wayman

2413 Lizbec Court

Crofton, MD 21114



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism insurance support

Richa Khanna <richakapoor@yahoo.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 10:47 AM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I have a child on the spectrum and I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Richa khanna
11920, White Heather Rd,
Cockeysville, MD, 21030.



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

support insurance coverage for behavioral therapy

gaverma@verizon.net <gaverma@verizon.net>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 10:42 AM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Please be the voice for these families and make a change!

Sincerely,

MaryAnn Gaver

6455 Pound Apple Ct

Columbia, MD 21045



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

metamorphosis-pilates@comcast.net <metamorphosis-pilates@comcast.net>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 9:41 AM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Sharon Tringali
10914 Summit Ave
Woodstock, MD 21163

Sharon Tringali / Owner
Metamorphosis Pilates and Fitness
410-795-1201
www.metamorphosispilates.com



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Habilitative services

Al Yukna <al@yukna.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 9:48 AM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Alexei N. Yukna
2812 Erie Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21234



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism and Mental Health Services

Sarah Tringali <sarah.m.tringali@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 9:28 AM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Ms. Grant,

I am writing to you to express my support for Autism and other Mental Health program government funding. I work in the Mental Health field, and I see the harmful results of untreated Autism and Mental Health issues daily in my work with adults and their children. Due to lack of Mental Health coverage by Insurance Companies, many families cannot afford the necessary interventions to provide quality of life and independent living skills, leaving families in dire financial straights, and/or completely helpless to provide proper care for family members. Considering the rise of mental-health related crimes, poverty, and hospitalization, I urge Maryland to take steps toward helping its citizens address Mental Health issues and provide assistance to its citizens, for the welfare of all.

Thank You!

Sarah M Tringali
M.S. Counselor Education
Sarah.m.Tringali@gmail.com



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

coverage

Claudia Borsella <cmborsella@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 9:12 AM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Claudia Borsella
5352 Perring Pkwy
Baltimore, MD 21239



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

More insurance coverage, please

Amy Sanders <chickanddale@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 8:48 AM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Amy Sanders
1311 Morling Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21211



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

Stephanie Durfee <stephanie.durfee@shafercenter.com>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 8:33 AM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of rehabilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Durfee

Stephanie Durfee M.SEd
Education Director
The Shafer Center
410.517.1113|stephanie.durfee@shafercenter.com



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

FW: Insurance help for Autism

Grote, Dennis <DGrote@butlerschein.com>
To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 7:55 AM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. I have friends with an autistic child.

Respectfully,

Dennis Grote

Hampstead, MD

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Butler Schein Animal Health



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

support of insurance coverage

Downey, Joliean <JMDOWNE@carrollk12.org>
To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 7:21 AM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Joliean High-Downey
2812 Hilltop Drive
Manchester, MD 21102



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance help for Autism

Gina Sharp <gtoons@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 6:00 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. My daughter Stephanie Sharp is one of them.

Respectfully,

Gina H. Sharp
3043 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21218



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance coverage

brushap@yahoo.com <brushap@yahoo.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 6:11 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait!

Respectfully,

Bruce S. Shapiro
3043 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21218



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

kwells@vineseis.com <kwells@vineseis.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 6:16 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Karen Wells

8270 Berryfield Drive

Baltimore, MD 21236

Karen A. Wells

Owner, Speech-Language Pathologist

The Vines Early Intervention Services

Certified WeeHands Instructor

phone: 443-275-1663

fax: 443-275-1671

8600 LaSalle Road, Potomac Suite 107

Towson, MD 21286



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

autism coverage

Karen Wells <renski1@yahoo.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 6:18 PM

Reply-To: Karen Wells <renski1@yahoo.com>

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Robert Wells

8270 Berryfield Drive

Baltimore, MD 21236



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism coverage

WILLIAM WINKLER <williamwinklerjr@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: WILLIAM WINKLER <williamwinklerjr@yahoo.com>
To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 6:39 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children with autism and siblings need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

I have attached a picture of someone that could use coverage, my son 4 years old.

Respectfully,

Winkler Family
930 southwick
Towson, MD 21286

Filson Family
933 Sherwood Forest RD
Annapolis, Md 21401

Winkler Family
2416 Bauschmdit Dr
Essex, MD 21221



treyBandW.jpg
5429K



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage for medically necessary behavioral therapy

Brooke Poklemba <bpoklemba@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 7:17 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

As a former Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Therapist I have seen first hand just how beneficial behavioral therapy is for children with special needs. During my year as Miss Maryland 2009 and as a contestant in the 2010 Miss America Competition, I made Autism Awareness my official platform and spoke throughout the state of Maryland about the dire need of insurance coverage for medically necessary habilitative services including behavioral therapy. I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Brooke Poklemba
2217 Dulany Terrace
Westminster, MD 21157

—
Brooke Poklemba
Bpoklemba@gmail.com
(443) 632-8950
www.BrookePoklemba.com
Join my mailing list



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage

Ashley Edmunds <ab.edmunds@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 7:20 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Ashley Edmunds

7426 Thames River Drive

Hanover, MD 21076



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

ABA - written testimony and video

Hope Couser <ahcouser@hotmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 7:23 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Hi Ms. Grant:

My name is Hope Couser, and I have attached written testimony in support of ABA being covered by our private insurance under habilitative services. In addition to the attached written testimony, here is a link to a video I have created:

Here is the link to a video. The url is <https://vimeo.com/55698565>

The password is abadaid

Can you please email me back so that I know you received this email with my attached written testimony and link/password to my video? Thank you so very much!

Hope Couser

**Testimony ABA 2012 written.doc**

317K



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Coverage

Sara Schlessman <saraschlessman@hotmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 8:13 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Rusty & Sara Schlessman

1406 Charmuth Rd Timonium, MD 21093



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

Jamie Mindel <jamie.paige@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 8:51 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Jamie Mindel
6927-C Clearwind Court
Baltimore Md 21209

Sent from my iPhone



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Sound Off Maryland, Tell the State You Want Meaningful Autism Coverage

Patricia Bonaz <patbonaz@verizon.net>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 9:13 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Mrs. Grant,

I received the email below because I am the parent of an autistic child. Connor is 4 years-old, a handsome and happy child. He has a twin sister. They are very fond of each other but like any siblings they have their moments.

Besides is inherent happiness, Connor has his challenges. He suffers from anxiety, his speech is significantly delay (actually he is about 1 year delayed in all areas of development), but most of all, he has extreme behaviors or at least the behaviors used to be extreme.

When he was 3 years-old and diagnosed with Autism, I suffered through head banging (one time he almost broke my nose), biting through the skin to the blood, pinching to the point my forearms especially were covered in bruises and more. I was not the only one suffering, he was too. So was his sister whom he hit, pinched and bit. His father and grandmother who suffers from a blood condition and bruises even more easily did not escape. "Friends" at the playground and the classroom also endured.

When he was 3, I did not think I could survive it, the impact on our family unit was devastating. Then we started 16h of ABA/week. Slowly but surely, his communication improved and with it, his behaviors decreased. With ABA, he became able to listen and focus. With ABA he learned valuable communication tools, self-help skills, the value of compliance and following directions. He also learned that we are working with him, not against.

ABA saved our lives. Now, we are a working family again, not a broken one. His sister is not afraid of him; they can play together. In a little more than a year the progress was remarkable, but most of all down the road, I can see Connor being a positive contributor to our society, not a burden. That is the ultimate goal. That is the investment that we are making now and that needs to be supported. ABA is expensive and most definitely necessary. It is not a luxury or just educational. In many ways, it is a survival treatment (just as much as chemotherapy is for cancer patient - of course, at the end, some makes it and some don't, but we do not base the decision to provide the treatment base on a no-result outcome).

Dear Mrs. Grant, this is the plea of a mother to access behavioral treatments (such as ABA but not limited to it) that are indeed medically necessary to treat autism.

Best regards,
Patricia Bonaz.

From: Judith at Autism Votes [mailto:advocacy@autismspeaks.org]**Sent:** Wednesday, December 05, 2012 3:07 PM**To:** Stein, Joy**Subject:** Sound Off Maryland, Tell the State You Want Meaningful Autism Coverage



It's time for lawmakers to listen.

December 5, 2012

Dear Joy

The Maryland Autism Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is now accepting public comments on whether the state should include behavioral health treatments, such as ABA, under existing law.

Created under legislation enacted earlier this year, the panel is required to recommend what habilitative services are appropriate and medically necessary to treat children with autism. As part of its charge, the TAG must accept written public comments. The public comments must be received no later than 5 pm on Friday December 21. In addition, the task force will accept public comment at its January meeting. We will alert you when the date is scheduled.

Urge the task force to recommend coverage for behavioral health treatments, such as ABA, that historically have been excluded.

**SEND Your Comments to Marie Grant,
Director of Government Affairs for**



Donate Now

Join Autism Votes Mobile by texting "**AVotes**" to **30644**!

*Autism Votes is an initiative of **Autism Speaks**.*

**the Maryland Department of Health and
Mental Hygiene, at:
marie.grant@maryland.gov**

To learn more about the task force, go here.

**The work of this group is critical to finally
establishing meaningful health insurance
coverage for autism treatment in Maryland! Thank
you for taking time to advocate!**

If you have specific questions, please feel free to
contact me at judith.ursitti@autismspeaks.org.

Warm regards,

Judith Ursitti
Director, State Government Affairs
Autism Speaks



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Important

Dara Silbert <dgsilbert@gmail.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 9:20 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. As a speech language pathologist and a former ABA therapist, I know the positive impact therapy can have on children with autism. Unfortunately I know the overwhelming costs of these services as well and I can't imagine how many families can't afford these programs.

Respectfully,

Dara Silbert

1613 Crownsville Rd
Crownsville, MD 21032

--

Dara Silbert

"Smile! It lights up your face and mine!"



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance coverage for autism disorders

Wendy Wingate <wmwingate@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 9:29 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I fully support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage NOW. There is an epidemic going on. One in fifty four boys and one in every eighty eight children can no longer wait!!!! Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. This is an URGENT situation. Our children are depending on us!!!!!!

Respectfully yours,

Ms. Wendy Wingate

3225 Noss Drive

Manchester, Md 21102



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage for children with autism in Maryland

wendyrea@comcast.net <wendyrea@comcast.net>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 9:34 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. This includes my wonderful son, Nathaniel who is 14 years old. He has been without coverage for a long time now. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Wendy Rea

3631 Hallie Avenue

Manchester, MD 21102



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

support coverage

Taryn Silbert <taryn.silbert@gmail.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 9:41 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. I am a speech pathologist and work with children with autism everyday, please please help this children!

Respectfully,

Taryn Gilbertson

216 Warren Avenue

Baltimore, Md 21230



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance coverage please

Madeline Davis <vegmad@aol.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 9:47 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Madeline Davis
2100 Bay Drive
Annapolis, Md. 21409

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(~)(~)
(")_(")



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

1 in 54

Jcomotto <jcomotto@aol.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 10:10 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait. My son is one of them. We pay 100% out of pocket for services that are necessary for him to grow and develop.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Comotto

9410 Old Harford Road

Parkville, MD 21234



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism

Winn Eckert <Weckert@yazoomills.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 10:29 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Winn Eckert
6825 Laurel Summit Drive
Hanover, PA 17331



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance coverage

Kristen Skerry <kristenskerry@hotmail.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 10:30 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Kristen skerry
4 bird hill court
Lutherville md. 21093

Sent from my iPhone



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage

christamclain@yahoo.com <christamclain@yahoo.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 10:48 PM

Reply-To: christamclain@yahoo.com

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Christa M. Mason
29 Theo Lane
Towson, Maryland. 21204
Sent via BlackBerry by AT&T



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance coverage for Autistic children

Tim Allgire <tllalgire@yahoo.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 11:06 PM

Reply-To: Tim Allgire <tllalgire@yahoo.com>

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Tim Allgire

203 Hunters Run Ter

Bel Air, MD 21015



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Md insurance

Jeff and Sarah Burke <sarah.jeff@comcast.net>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 11:24 PM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Burke

8215 Grainfield Rd

Severn, Md 21144



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

(no subject)

Zakia Abedin <zakia_abedin@hotmail.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Thu, Dec 20, 2012 at 1:06 AM

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Zakia Abedin
704 Peterson Road
Middle River, MD 21220



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage

Michelle <michelle_reed123@yahoo.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 5:49 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,
Michelle Reed
2534 Melba Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Insurance Coverage

Melissa Engerman <mengerman2@yahoo.com>

Wed, Dec 19, 2012 at 5:46 PM

Reply-To: Melissa Engerman <mengerman2@yahoo.com>

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Melissa Engerman

Parkville, MD 21234



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance Coverage

Sumersj <sumersj@gmail.com>

Tue, Dec 18, 2012 at 7:22 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I have a child on the spectrum and I support insurance coverage for medically necessary and appropriate use of habilitative services including behavioral therapy. Maryland families and children need this coverage now. Every child should have access to proper and appropriate therapeutic services as it paves the way for the rest of their lives. 1 in 54 boys and 1 in 88 children can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Sumers
26 Cypress Point Court
Westminster, MD 21158



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Public Comment

Sarah Broady <sarah@spacelots.com>

Thu, Dec 13, 2012 at 4:32 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the mother of three children, one of which is affected by autism. My husband is the Associate Pastor at a small church and we do not have insurance through his work, so we have to buy it on our own. The insurance we have does not cover autism therapies. Our children are on the Maryland Medicaid insurance plan, which also does not cover ABA therapy.

ABA therapy is extremely important to us because the year our son, Samuel, was diagnosed, at age 27 months of age (he is now 7 years old), he had no communication skills other than screaming and self-destructive behaviors. Our family was in turmoil as we struggled to understand what was happening in our son. When a diagnosis was finally determined, we still had eight more months to receive services through the state's Early Intervention program, which included ABA services. Samuel received several hours of both speech and ABA each week, and the progress he made was astounding. But then he turned 3, and had to enter the preschool program to continue to receive services, though his therapy was only loosely based on ABA concepts, not true ABA therapy.

Samuel is currently mainstreamed into his 2nd grade classroom (his school does not have special needs classes of smaller sizes) and is more or less considered "high-functioning" due to his verbal abilities. I believe very strongly that his current abilities are directly attributed to the intense work we went through with him when he was two years old with speech and ABA therapy. However, he still struggles a GREAT deal with intense, severe behaviors which still include self-destructive acts such as hitting his head with both hands and posing a danger to himself others if kicking, or sometimes if he tries to jerk away from me as I try to hold his hand in a parking lot. Anxiety is very high, and his tolerance for frustration of any kind is very low. These are only a couple of the many challenges our son faces living with autism.

ABA therapy costs are astronomical and our family simply cannot afford the much-needed therapy for our son. We know it works - we've seen the incredible strides he's made, and now we're stuck and limited to our own knowledge and constant change in trial and error training methods, which only further inhibits him in his need for sameness and routine.

ABA therapy is the ONLY empirically-proven technique to help children with autism progress, yet it is the very therapy families are denied access to through insurance. THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE TO ME AND FAMILIES ACROSS OUR STATE.

We are in desperate need of help - and we are even among the "lucky" ones with a child who is already verbal. But he still needs help. We as parents need help to know how to train him, how to bring him out, how to help him. The BEST way to do that is with IN-HOME ABA therapy. It is crucial to receive IN-HOME THERAPY so the child can understand how to apply the learned concepts and methods where he or she spends the most time: at HOME. Children with autism have great difficulty with generalization, which is applying one particular idea to the same situation in any location, as well as various situations. Learning something in an office may be the only place the child applies that method. But if he learns it in the very home in which he lives, it makes it much easier for him and the parents to take it outside the home. Whether in home or office though, ABA therapy is the NECESSARY therapy for our children.

I urge you, from a mother's heart, to please seriously consider the incredible benefits to Samuel, and thousands of children all over Maryland and Washington D.C. Families like mine cannot afford the crushing \$1600 per month costs (or more) for ABA therapy. Scholarships may only last a very short while. Grants are few and hard to get.

The most effective way to reach these families is to make ABA therapy a necessary inclusion for insurance plans to cover. ALL insurance plans, especially including Medicaid/state insurance, not just the elite policies that are still too expensive to buy.

We cannot afford to lose anymore time with our son. 32 states have boarded the train, and it's high time Maryland does the same. My 1 in 88 can't wait!

Best regards,
Sarah Broady
301-828-6361
sarah@spacelots.com



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism Technical Advisory Group Comments

Kelly Lyons <klyons@jhu.edu>

Thu, Dec 13, 2012 at 4:05 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Ms. Grant,

I am contacting you regarding the Autism Technical Advisory Group. I support legislation that would include coverage for medically necessary treatment (biomedical treatment included) and behavioral therapy/support services. My 12 year old son was diagnosed with a non-specified autism spectrum disorder several years ago. The behavioral support is necessary in helping him achieve his academic and IEP goals. Families need this insurance coverage.

Sincerely,

Kelly Lyons

Bel Air, MD



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Re: ABA

Michael J. Crosman <mcrosman@themeyergroup.com>
To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>
Cc: Myriam Crosman <myriam_crosman@hotmail.com>

Mon, Dec 10, 2012 at 11:19 AM

December 10, 2012

Ms. Marie Grant

Director of Government Affairs

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Dear Marie,

Hello, and Happy Holidays! My name is Mike Crosman of College Park, Md. and I am a very proud Grandfather of an Autistic Grandson, Joseph. He lives in Carroll County, Md. (Manchester) and is 5 ½ years old.

The reason I am emailing you today is to share my sentiments on the ABA protocol for the treatment of Autism and to urge the State of Maryland Task Force to recommend coverage for behavioral health treatments, such as ABA, that historically have been excluded. It is so ironic that Applied Behavior Analysis, although endorsed and widely recognized as a major facilitating factor in producing dramatic improvements in communication, social interaction, play, self care, school success, and eventual employment, has not been included in any Maryland Insurance mandates. The improvements I have seen in Grandson Joseph over the last three years are significantly due to his special school environment and the speech therapy he receives. It is heartbreaking to me to realize that many, many young Autistic children simply cannot have access to these services due to lack of resources.

I come from a health care background and appreciate the benefit decisions that must be made on a daily basis regarding "cost versus care". With the incidence of Autism and Spectrum disorders rising rapidly, and with costs of care slated to rise exponentially over the next decade, it is absolutely crucial that the Autism Healthcare mandates include medical coverage for behavioral health treatments such as ABA.

Have a wonderful Holiday!

Sincerely,

Mike

Michael J. Crosman

7406 Dartmouth Ave.

College Park, Md. 20740

Ph: (301) 277-1337

Email: crosmanmj@verizon.net



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Insurance in maryland and autism and aba

veronica hippensteel <vhippensteel@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: veronica hippensteel <vhippensteel@yahoo.com>
To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>
Cc: Martin OMalley <governor@gov.state.md.us>

Wed, Dec 5, 2012 at 11:22 PM

I am so relieved to see that Maryland is finally looking into laws to make insurance coverage for aba. I have been trying for years to get aba for my son with severe autism. I have been on the waiver wait list for five years and it will provide aba when I finally get on it but he will be so old then. The list is long.

This year when my son was out of control the dda approved us for emergency funds to pay for aba till the one time funds ran out. The therapy was amazing and when my son returned to school they keep saying how well he is doing compared to last year. My son is in a center and needs more of this therapy to get him to behave in a proper way and to learn to go the the toilet. My heart is breaking as the therapy is ending this month and I don't know how I will handle him till he gets trained to control his self in every situation. How fast can you make this law take effect? We have two insurance companies and the secondary is thru the CHIPS program and medical assistance. I need help now.

Veronica



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Behavioral health therapy treatments for Autistic children - URGENT NEED

Susan Austin <susan@spacelots.com>

Wed, Dec 5, 2012 at 5:28 PM

To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Dear Ms. Grant,

I am pleading with and strongly urging the Maryland Autism Technical Advisory Group to move forward with making behavioral health therapy treatments, such as ABA, included under existing Maryland state law as medically necessary. This is CRITICAL for every child with Autism -- and for every parent raising a child with Autism. ABA therapy is a *proven* effective therapy -- as none other -- for the treatment of Autism. Unfortunately, without it being included under state law as a medically necessary treatment, it is also outside the financial grasp of most families.

Speaking personally, I have an Autistic 7-year-old grandson, Sam (living in Poolesville, Maryland). Sam is in *desperate* need of receiving ABA therapy to help him (and his parents) deal with the severe challenges that Autism presents him on a daily basis, but it is not affordable for Sam's parents on their income, and, unfortunately, we (the grandparents) also do not have that kind of disposable income that we could give to cover the cost. The monthly cost for Sam to receive ABA therapy independently starts at \$1,000.00 PER MONTH (and that's for very minimal therapy time).

I do not understand why Maryland is so behind the eight-ball on this one, but it's high time for Maryland to step up and help these children who so desperately need it, NOW. With 1 in every 88 children (and mostly boys) being diagnosed with Autism (a number which will most likely continue to rise, as it has over the last several years), there is no more time to waste. These are children who, with proper therapy, can learn to deal with and, in some instances, overcome the challenges of Autism in order to lead healthy, productive lives. This is a heavy financial burden very few families can bear. These kids are Maryland's next generation of Maryland, and they need this. Now.

Thank you for listening. Please act on behalf of every 1 in 88.

Susan Austin
Davidsonville, Maryland
410-798-4008



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Autism - ABA

Gorham, DeBora D - Washington, DC <debora.d.gorham@usps.gov>

Wed, Dec 5, 2012 at 5:01 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Hi Ms. Grant,

I urge the task force to recommend coverage for behavioral health treatments, such as ABA, that historically have been excluded. This will enable many children and adults to receive treatment and for research to continue.

Thank you

DeBora Gorham

Concerned Citizen



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Public comment

irene gomez <irene_gomez22@hotmail.com>
To: marie.grant@maryland.gov

Wed, Dec 5, 2012 at 4:59 PM

Hi Ms. Grant.

I would like to recommend coverage for behavioral health treatments, such as ABA under the task force, please. This will help us a lot with my 14 year old son with autism.

Thanks so much and God bless.

Irene
240-273-2243



Marie Grant -DHMH- <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

We support meaningful Behavioral Health Coverage including ABA!!

Diana Wingate-Gaiser <dwingate-gaiser@jhu.edu>

Wed, Dec 5, 2012 at 4:29 PM

To: "marie.grant@maryland.gov" <marie.grant@maryland.gov>

Cc: "Gaiser, Andrew (Andrew_Gaiser@troweprice.com)" <Andrew_Gaiser@troweprice.com>

Dear Ms. Grant,

I am a constituent living in Manchester MD and am contacting you to support meaningful Autism Insurance Legislation. My husband and I have 2 beautiful boys ages 8 and 6 who have been diagnosed with Autism. To say it has been challenging navigating the educational and medical system these last 6 years would be profoundly understated.

To deprive a child of therapeutic services because of lack of insurance coverage is not an option for us and would be a complete disservice to our children. We spend over \$20,000.00 per year out of pocket for medical/therapeutic services that are not covered by insurance. This does not include deductibles or copays. The financial impact is enormous and many families cannot afford these additional services we paid out of pocket for. We resorted to putting the majority of this on a credit card and carrying the debt.

Behavior therapy is backed by science and is highly effective. It is not new; B.F. Skinner introduced it to the world in the 1950's. This therapy teaches functional skills to children with autism and is tracked and analyzed by data. We have over 6 years of data for our boys showing the effectiveness of this therapy. Data does not lie.

We'll do whatever it takes to give our children every opportunity available but it's about time insurance covers proper Autism therapies. Currently, 1 in every 88 children and 1 in every 54 boys is being diagnosed with autism. We know for a fact the latest statistics released by the CDC last year are dated by 2 years. So the likely statistic is closer to 1 in 40 children are being diagnosed. This statistic increases with each passing year. Families and children need support now! This has absolutely become a national health crisis.

1. 1 in 88 children are diagnosed with Autism

- a. 1 in 54 boys are diagnosed with Autism

2. 32 states have passed autism insurance legislation

- a. 75% of the US population live in a state with autism insurance coverage
- b. How is MD not one of them when we are surrounded by cutting-edge intervention and medical resources? People from all over the world come to MD for services!
- c. Our neighboring states (PA, DE, NJ, VA and WV) all have autism insurance coverage

3. A Plethora of cost analysis data supporting long-term cost savings for the state exists

- a. It costs an average of \$25k a year for each autistic child in the public school system.
- This is aside of the additional private therapies families seek out since the public school system can simply not support these children's needs completely and appropriately.
 - In many cases families hire ABA trained aides to shadow their child in school ; this is an out-of-pocket expense
 - In many cases there is no appropriate fit in a mainstream environment and private ABA therapy is the only option
 - All therapeutic support becomes an out-of-pocket expense averaging \$120 an hour
- b. It costs an average of \$13k a year for each non-autistic child in the public school system.

I am confident the end result of this task force will confirm what I've been emailing legislatures about for last 3 years. But, we are literally racing against time for our children... our future. 1 in 88 can no longer wait.

Respectfully,

Diana Wingate-Gaiser

Manchester, MD

Mr Montgomery,

I have a 17 yr old son diagnosed with Autistic Behavior due to a dysfunctional immune condition. I ran an in-home Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program for him starting when he was 3 yrs old and ending 3.5 yrs later.

ABA was prescribed for my son by Dr. C.T. Gordon - a known specialist in Autism.

He went to college and is personal friends with Dr Rebecca Landa of Kennedy Krieger CARD.

Jacob's program was supervised by a PhD consultant from the Ivar Lovaas facility in Cherry Hill, NJ.

The program ran 7 days a week - 6 hrs each day. There were monthly 6 hr training classes.

It was paid for by us and via fundraisers by our church.

Anne Arundel Special Education refused to assist us with costs; they refused to accept the IEP we proposed. Blue Cross/Blue Shield Federal refused to pay for anything including the therapists we had to find, hire and in some cases train.

The program was very successful. We have 3.5 yrs worth of paperwork and video to prove it.

ABA retrains the dysfunctional brain. It helps to 'reboot' connections that are misfiring.

Much like physical therapy helps the body and speech therapy helps a person to communicate.

I am unable to testify on January 29 due to work requirements.

Is there anything I can provide for the hearing that might help get treatments such as ABA covered under existing state law?

Thank you -

Doris R Smith

Millersville, MD 21108

sjsmith@cablespeed.com

Michael Lawler
9901 Sherwood Farm Rd
Owings Mills, MD 21117
443-718-9035
mklawler@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to add my testimony in regards to the current proposal regarding behavioral treatments for children with autism spectrum disorders. I believe my story is relevant to this topic and will hopefully help add clarity and pertinent evidence to support the need for these treatments, and coverage for them by insurance providers.

My son Ethan was born in 2002 and for the first 18 months of his life, was a normally developing child. He was happy, playful, and there were few signs of any problems. As he got older, it became more apparent something was wrong. The big clue was that he was severely speech delayed (he did not have any speech at all at 18 months). He also had numerous behavioral issues (tantrums), sensitivity to noise and touch, and sometimes exhibited odd behavior such as banging his head on the floor. Through a home-based outreach program in Howard County, he received one-on-one services and was eventually selected for inclusion in a MINC-P preschool program to help meet his needs. As part of the services included with the program, the school did a battery of neuropsychological tests to help determine what was wrong with Ethan. In early 2004, the school psychologist met with his mother and I to tell us that Ethan, in fact, had autism. Specifically, he diagnosed him with Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), which is a disorder on the autism spectrum. We didn't know what any of that meant - we were in shock. We didn't know what to do. We actually fought the diagnosis and worked with an advocate to have it removed from his records. It wasn't until we got a second opinion from Kennedy Krieger that the truth set in - Ethan did indeed have autism. More importantly, the doctor who handled Ethan's case at Kennedy Krieger made the case much more strongly. He made it clear that a) we were wasting our time fighting about the diagnosis and we needed to get to work for Ethan's sake, b) what Ethan needed was a type of behavioral therapy known commonly as Applied Behavior Analysis, or ABA (the only proven therapy to help children with autism), and c) our goal should be to remediate Ethan's skill deficits by kindergarten.

We immediately reversed course, tried to accept Ethan's situation, and set about learning about ABA. We then began working to try and hire professionals to help us with the cause. The first thing we were told by providers and other parents was that it "is very expensive and insurance NEVER pays for it." I found this hard to believe, particularly when voices such as the Surgeon General of the United States, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association were all active proponents of the treatment. Everything I had read indicated this was the most researched and documented approach to helping children across the autism spectrum. I took my case to my benefits coordinator in my office, who said she would research the issue to make sure it would be covered. I wanted to make sure it was pre-approved before I started working with any particular professionals. I felt confident any confusion would be worked out.

About a week after I made this request, I got a call from her while at work, asking me to join her in a conference room. When I arrived, she was there with numerous representatives from our Human Resources department. She told me they had just finished a long call with their counterparts at our insurance company and that "they had decided that Ethan doesn't really need ABA therapy." [emphasis mine] Instead, they recommended utilizing their coverage for speech and occupational therapy only. Essentially I was told that they considered ABA experimental, despite the fact that there were literally decades of studies on its efficacy. I was dumbfounded. This was not the answer I anticipated - I didn't expect my insurance company to not only not cover these expenses, but also try to talk me out of them. I made it clear this was unacceptable, but to no avail.

So we moved ahead with ABA on our own. As it turned out, calling ABA expensive was a gross understatement. ABA involves an entire team of individuals when done correctly. The team involves an ABA consultant (a skilled professional who designs the specifics of the program tailored to the child's needs and adjusts along the way), and individual therapists (who work directly with the child implementing the program). There are tremendous upfront costs including: assessments of the child to identify specific skill deficits, training of therapists and even family members, and setup of the home environment and materials for the therapy. This adds up quickly. Consultants could earn from \$90 up to \$200 an hour. And therapists, while substantially cheaper, have to put in the long hours of therapy (Ethan had 30-40 hours a week for 2 years). When all was said and done, our expenses on Ethan's therapy totaled to six figures.

The costs are the bad news. The results, however, are the good news. ABA and similar therapies are unlike other treatments in that they are based entirely on the data. During every therapy session, the therapist is collecting data about the skills being targeted. The child has to demonstrate mastery multiple times before a skill is considered mastered and new skills are targeted. Children with autism do not learn incidentally. They need things taught them in specific, concrete ways. This is the strength of how ABA works. In fact, there is even scientific evidence that ABA actually helps “re-wire” the brain and help it learn more effectively on its own. I hope this committee has received substantial medical background to support this (FYI - an example of a recent study supporting this can be found here: <http://news.yahoo.com/study-early-behaviorial-intervention-rewires-autistic-childrens-brains-211900879.html>)

For Ethan, ABA was almost magical. If there was a poster child for this form of therapy, Ethan would have certainly qualified. He excelled at acquiring skills. He loved his therapists and wanted to make them happy as well. The turnaround was remarkable. Even his consultant would remark to us how amazed she was at how quickly he would pick most things up utilizing the behavioral techniques. Some areas were slower for him - especially social cues. But areas such as speech, tantrums, and sensitivities were all addressed through ABA. In summary, we witnessed a miracle over the course of 2-3 years.

By the time Ethan reached Kindergarten, he attended a normal class and was reading on a second grade level before he even started. He was also doing math at an above grade level as well. He was social, fun-loving, and enjoyed school immensely.

We took him back to Kennedy Krieger for follow-up and were told that he no longer technically qualified for a diagnosis of autism based on his symptoms (or lack thereof). They tested his IQ, which originally was estimated at 57 when he was first diagnosed, and found him to now be well above average. In fact, they were absolutely amazed and asked in more detail about his ABA program in order to share details with other families.

Today, Ethan is a thriving 10-year old. He remains a star student, and shows no outward signs of any developmental delay of any kind. While there are probably multiple factors that contributed to his recovery, there is little doubt that the primary reason he was able to escape the world he was trapped in was his access to ABA and the hard work he put in with his therapists and the team over 2+ years.

It can't be overlooked that the expense of ABA is truly overwhelming. In our situation, it meant dissolving just about every asset we had and taking on debt in every way possible (including maxing out of credit cards and utilizing every ounce of home equity we had). The stress of those financial decisions weighs heavy on families. Many don't have the resources or the will to take that on. Essentially, ABA as a self-funded therapy is cost prohibitive. Without insurance coverage, families are forced every day to make terrible choices between the future of their children and the future of their families themselves.

The financial burden this put on our particular family was a major factor in the ultimate separation and divorce of Ethan's mother and myself. It isn't fair to say ABA caused the split, but it is fair to say that ABA was a major factor. Unfortunately, this outcome is all too common with families with children on the autism spectrum (I have been forced to watch friends go down this path as well). Having said all of this, I have no regrets and wouldn't change a thing, because my son recovered. I am thankful for this every day and I know that ABA was the reason for it. But there is little doubt that our family would have taken a different path if we had a true partner in our insurance company who helped us cover those expenses.

I am writing this committee not simply to share a success story of behavioral therapy. If you dig deeply, you will find many many more I am sure. Rather, I am writing with the sincere hope that this therapy is seen not as fringe, not as experimental, not even controversial in any way. Insurance companies use these types of labels in order to deny coverage like they did to Ethan. The idea that such a well studied and proven method for helping children on the autism spectrum is denied insurance coverage is not consistent with the underlying mission of health insurance. It is repulsive to me that insurance companies are allowed to leave their customers twisting in the wind simply because they can. Families with children on the autism spectrum are being forced to make a choice between helping their child and bankrupting their family. Why is that acceptable? Insurance providers should be held to the same standard as they would with any other proven medical treatment. This is why so many other states have come to the conclusion that coverage for these types of therapy should be mandatory.

If we cannot resolve this issue as a community, we are going to be left with a growing population of autistic adults who did not benefit from early intervention like Ethan did. The incidence rate of autism continues to skyrocket every year with no end in sight. If we think the problem is costly now, that problem will only be exponentially worse (for both insurance companies and state governments) in the years ahead as those kids become adults. Let's fix this while we still can.

Sincerely,

Michael Lawler