



## **House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services**

Testimony on HB 166

Marla Root, Founder & Director, Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition

April 10, 2019

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition. My name is Marla Root and I am the founder and director of the Coalition.

I am here today to offer proponent testimony on the Governor's Office of Children's Initiatives and Ohio Medicaid's proposed investment to fund new services for individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in the proposed state operating budget.

The Autism Insurance Coalition currently has more than twenty practitioner organizations specializing in treatment services for autism. Our partners include hospitals, community mental health centers, small to medium practitioner organizations, advocacy groups and families. The Coalition actively works to support families across both public and private insurers to access treatment for medically necessary services.

The operating budget proposed by Governor DeWine demonstrates his commitment to support Ohio's children especially those children involved in multi-systems, many of whom have autism. We are very appreciative of your committee's commitment to support multi-system youth as well.

We are pleased with the Governor and Ohio Medicaid's proposal to invest in a Medicaid benefit for Applied Behavior Analysis treatment for individuals with autism. Applied Behavior Analysis, also known as ABA, is a well-developed scientific discipline among the helping professions that focuses on the analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation of social and other environmental modifications to produce meaningful changes in human behavior. ABA treatment services are provided and supervised by certified Behavior Analysts with expertise and formal training in ABA for the specific treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder. In 2018, the American

Medical Association announced new permanent CPT medical codes for Adaptive Behavior Assessment and Treatment, the new medical term for ABA, for insurance reimbursement and the Department of Medicaid proposes to implement these codes in the new treatment benefit.

Through my experiences with my own son with autism and the Coalition's ABA provider network across the state, we have case managed hundreds of individuals with autism, those seeking outpatient treatment services and those in a behavioral crisis, and we continuously see positive treatment outcomes and family impact driven by the ability to access ABA treatment.

Currently, Ohio is one of only eight states without a state plan Medicaid benefit for ABA and all surrounding states to Ohio offer the benefit. Even though currently MCOs cover the services under their EPSDT obligations for autism, this has come with challenges. It's time for Medicaid parity.

The Coalition agrees with Governor DeWine and the Department of Medicaid, that an accessible ABA treatment benefit will meet federal EPSDT obligations and be a preventative factor in keeping children with their families and preventing the need for out-of-home placements.

Again, we are so thankful for your committee's support for Ohio's multi-system youth and our Coalition supports the budget initiatives supporting multi-system youth and ending custody relinquishment to access treatments.

So, please support this preventative treatment service of Applied Behavior Analysis and let's take a step to lowering the number of children with autism who could become multi-system youth and need expensive out-of-home placement. The Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition is asking you to preserve the dedicated \$28 million dollars in the executive budget as introduced for the new Medicaid ABA treatment service for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer any questions and offer to be a future resource for you.

**Accessing Abilities, LLC**, (216) 469-8398, Serving Northeast Ohio,

**Applied Behavioral Connections**, Serving Canton and Akron

**Bierman ABA Autism Centers**, (317) 815-5501, Coming to Ohio soon

**BlueSprig**, 216-278-0288, Serving Willoughby Hills & Cleveland Area

**Boundless Behavioral Health**, 614.436.7837, Serving Columbus and surrounding areas and Dayton

**Building Blocks Therapy**, (216) 282-1234 , Serving Northeast Ohio

**Cleveland Clinic Children's Center for Autism**, (216)-448-6440, Serving Cleveland and surrounding areas

**Cincinnati Center for Autism**, (513) 874-6789, Serving Cincinnati and surrounding areas

**The Children's Home of Cincinnati**, (513) 272-2800, Serving Cincinnati and surrounding areas

**FH&L Autism Services**, (855) 467-3273, Serving Athens, Hilliard, Columbus and Pickerington

**Gateway Pediatric Therapy, LLC**, (248) 712-4266, Coming soon to Toledo

**Homes For Kids, Inc. and Child and Family Solutions**, (330) 544-8005, Serving Niles, Ashtabula, Boardman Ohio and surrounding areas

**Kari S. Watts, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LLC**, (614) 219-1510, Serving Columbus and surrounding areas

**Key Behavior Services, LLC**, (937)952-6379, Serving Dayton and Cincinnati

**Keystone Autism and Behavior Interventions LLC**, (937)218-4845, Serving Cincinnati & Dayton

**Knapp Center for Childhood Development**, (330) 629-2955, Serving Boardman and Tri-County area

**Kidslink Connect**, 330-963-8600, Serving Streetsboro, Cuyahoga Valley and Twinsburg

**Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at Nationwide Children's Hospital**, (614) 355-7500, Serving Columbus and surrounding areas

**The Silver Lining Group**, (419)-747-4122, Serving Columbus, Westlake (Cleveland), St. Clairsville and Mansfield

**STEPS Center for Excellence in Autism**, (440) 572-1337, Serving Parma and surrounding areas

**Trumpet Behavioral Health**, (855)-824-5669, Serving Dayton, Cincinnati and Columbus

**The Learning Spectrum**, (614)-844-5433, Serving Columbus, Johnstown and Canal Winchester