

**Testimony for the Senate Finance Committee
On Custody Relinquishment and Multi-System
Youth (MSY) & Ohio Medicaid ABA Treatment
Service**



Marla Root, Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition

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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony 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 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 Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition currently has more than twenty practitioner organizations from around the state who specialize in behavioral 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.

Multi-System Youth and Custody Relinquishment

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. However, we need dedicated funding for multi-system youth not yet involved children services. We are very appreciative and support Senator Hottinger's amendment offering a separate crisis intervention fund of new flexible funding in the amount of \$6 million in 2020 and \$12 million in 2021 for multi-system youth who are currently in crisis and do not need children services involvement. We request the funding be placed in the Family and Children First line item in the OMHAS budget (GRF 336405) solely for the prevention of voluntary custody relinquishment just to access treatment.

Ohio Medicaid ABA Treatment Service

We are pleased with the Governor and Ohio Department of 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 seeking outpatient treatment services or in 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 for ABA treatment that meets federal EPSDT obligations and be a preventative factor in keeping children with their families and preventing the need for out-of-home placements.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we ask the committee to support:

- Senator Hottinger's amendment offering a separate crisis intervention fund of new flexible funding in the amount of \$6 million in 2020 and \$12 million in 2021 for multi-system youth who are in crisis and do not need children services involvement.
- Preserving the dedicated \$28 million dollars in the executive budget as introduced in the Ohio Department of Medicaid budget for the new Medicaid ABA treatment service for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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

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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