

To: Chairman Romanchuk  
Vice Chair Huffman,  
Ranking Member Liston  
Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee

From: Virginia Bryan  
Autism Society of Ohio  
7777 Kellsford Ct.  
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Re: HB 96

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Virginia Bryan. I am the Information and Referral Specialist for the Autism Society of Ohio and I am testifying to ask you to support three state budget amendments to open access to Autism therapies in Medicaid.

According to the most recent report from the CDC, Autism affects one in thirty-one children in Ohio and across the United States. With prompt, intensive treatment, many of those children will be able to overcome many of the challenges of their disability to live independent, productive lives. The most prescribed treatment for Autism is called applied behavior analysis or ABA Therapy. Only 8% of Medicaid-eligible children with Autism are getting that treatment.

In my position at Autism Society of Ohio, I am frequently contacted by families frustrated by their inability to access the treatment their children need. Frequently, families are forced to go through peer-to-peer medical review before this treatment is approved or denied, despite the fact that this is the scientifically accepted treatment for Autism. Medicaid currently has no uniform medical or reimbursement for ABA therapy. I am told that there are actually seven different medical policies regarding ABA therapy at present. Many families are also placed on waiting lists for that therapy due to an inadequate number of providers.

ASO, in collaboration with other disability groups in Ohio, propose three amendments to stabilize ABA therapy coverage within Medicaid:

1. We need Medicaid's new Fee-for-Service Reimbursement for ABA to begin July 1, 2025. While the Department of Medicaid is working to release delayed rules for ABA, they have already released these new rates developed by an actuarial firm.
2. We need a moratorium on the reduction of ABA reimbursement rates by managed care plans. Given the history of denial of ABA benefits, there should be a two-year prohibition on contract negotiations between managed care organizations and ABA providers.
3. Provide a 120 day grace period for behavior technicians (direct care staff) who have completed a 40-hour training course and successfully passed the BACB competency assessment supervised by a certified behavior analyst). This would allow those behavior technicians to deliver crucial ABA services while awaiting certification, but they must do so within 120 days.

Members of the Ohio Senate Medicaid Committee, thank you for your consideration. Please consider submitting these amendments to the legislative service commission. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.