

May 19, 2019

The Honorable Robert G. Ort
LOB 617
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Ort:

The legislation regarding Applied Behavior Analysis being provided and covered solely for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder is of great concern to me, as I am a parent whose child is being directly affected. It is unfortunate that within the state of New York, Applied Behavior Analysis services are not seen as a medical necessity for children living with diagnoses other than Autism Spectrum Disorder. Having a seven-year-old son of my own, who is afflicted with formal diagnoses of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) and Panic Disorder, I really wish that he would be able to have the same access to ABA therapy, as children with autism do. Along with his dual diagnosis, he also stutters. My son gets nervous about people knowing he stutters so he tries to deflect attention by engaging in other behaviors— some that may not be the most appropriate in the long run. Based on my knowledge of ABA, if given the opportunity to receive ABA services, my son would be able to learn more socially appropriate behaviors and possibly even healthy, lifelong coping skills. My son also has meltdowns and cries frequently and with great intensity, without being able to tell us what is wrong. At the age of seven, that is not very socially appropriate and once again, being that ABA is centered on socially significant behaviors, I strongly feel that receiving ABA therapy would be pivotal in the treatment of my son's diagnosis. Additionally, he does not let us know how he is feeling, internalizes and represses it all and unfortunately, this is all usually manifested in his aggressive behavior. He will hit and throw things when upset. Applied Behavior Analysis has been proven to be effective for aggressive behaviors as it controls the reinforcement the child receives for engaging in those behaviors, while simultaneously teaching socially appropriate ways of communicating the child's needs and getting the attention they want. Even with the current services that he is receiving, including Speech therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, he is unable to reach his full potential. Furthermore, he is constantly worrying and nervous about everything, to the extent that it can be described as catastrophizing. For example, he is always scared when mom or dad leave that something will happen to them. He also needs to make sure the doors are locked, because he is scared that someone will break in. I have hope that ABA would be able to help increase helpful and positive behaviors along with language and communication skills, while decreasing behaviors that hinder learning and social interactions. My son is being deprived of this behavioral health treatment option in spite of having special needs. I am asking that the current New York state Licensure Law that restricts the practice of Behavior Analysis to working only with individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder be lifted. It is truly inequitable, as individuals with varying disabilities who reside in other states are able to receive Behavior Analysis services. I am not asking for an unreasonable accommodation and really hope that this change is made in the near future, as our children with diagnoses other than autism are only getting older and it would be truly unfortunate if they continued being underserved. This is truly an important issue and the amendment of legislation regarding this matter is crucial. Thank you for your attention to my correspondence.

Sincerely,

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