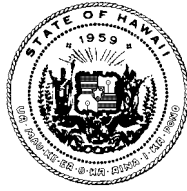


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

January 30, 2024

To: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2712 – RELATING TO AUTISM.**

Hearing: February 1, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill as long as it does not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Governor's budget.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to increase funding for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services and require DHS to obtain the maximum federal matching funds available for the expenditure.

DHS appreciates the intent of this bill to increase the rates for ABA services. ABA services are a clinically effective treatment modality for many children diagnosed with autism. The Med-QUEST Division commissioned a rate study for ABA services, which was submitted to the Legislature in December 2023. That rate study modeled low, medium, and high scenarios for consideration. The low scenario would require \$6.5M (\$2.69M state funds/\$3.81M federal), the medium scenario would require \$7.8M (\$3.23M state funds/\$4.57M federal), and the high scenario would require \$9.4M (\$3.9M state funds/\$5.5M federal). DHS prefers that any

January 30, 2024

Page 2

appropriation be included in the executive budget bill as opposed to this bill so the appropriation can be recurring and the increase ongoing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

February 1, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

House Bill 2712 – Relating to Autism

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 2712 – Relating to Autism.

This bill would appropriate funds to increase the funding for applied behavioral analysis services for persons with autism. These services have a positive long term impact on individuals with autism, but the failure to increase the reimbursement rate for almost a decade has made it difficult for Med-QUEST beneficiaries to obtain such services.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director



Kuhn Behavioral Consulting Services
HAWAII * COLORADO * UTAH * WYOMING
877-KUHNBCS
808-356-1310 – FAX
www.kuhnbc.com

To Whom It May Concern:

I submit this information today on behalf of our Hawaii-based Applied Behavior Analysis provider agency. Our agency has been providing evidenced based services in the state of Hawaii since 2016.

This letter is in support of ensuring adequate network capacity and increasing rates for service provision to the population of children and adults impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Our agency has been demonstrating difficulty in maintaining adequate staffing numbers due to increased cost of living in the state of Hawaii while rates of reimbursement have not shown an equivalent increase, and as such more than 30% of our staff have relocated to mainland offices, to ensure the ability to maintain a basic standard of living. Those staff have not been able to be replaced in Hawaii, due to inability to offer higher pay scales for our Medicaid clients. Many entry-level staff (RBT) are refusing work in the field outside of DOE based services, which pay at a significantly higher rate. This has directly impacted our ability to serve families located in the State of Hawaii, and has reduced the number of participants we are able to support.

The existing QUEST rates have not shown an adjustment since 2015, even as the cost of living in the state and the cost of providing services to these families has increased exponentially. This has caused our agency to implement wait lists for children and families who are in high need of support, which explicitly contradicts the requirements of EPSDT.

Due to these issues, our business has had to decrease its current available treatment openings for individuals in the state of Hawaii, and transition to states such as Utah, Colorado and Wyoming, which offer a more sustainable "rate vs cost of living" fee schedule.

As such, this letter is in support of efforts to increase of the current state of Hawaii QUEST rates for ABA services.

Thank you for your time.

Stacey E Kuhn, MS, BCBA, LBA
Owner – Kuhn Behavioral Consulting Services

January 30, 2024

Representative Lisa Marten
Chair, House Committee on Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol

Representative Terez Amato
Vice Chair, House Committee on Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol

Hearing Date: February 1, 2024 via Videoconference

Re: In Support of HB2712 *Submitted online via the Hawaii State Legislature website*

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the committee,

I write to you today on behalf of the Council of Autism Service Providers (CASP) in support of HB2712 relating to autism. CASP is a non-profit trade association of organizations committed to providing evidence-based services, including applied behavior analysis (ABA), to individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). CASP represents the autism provider community to the nation at large, including government, payers, and the general public. We provide information and education and promote standards that enhance quality of care.

Of particular interest to CASP members is the coverage of evidence-based services in both private health insurance plans as well as through Medicaid. The State of Hawaii took an important step in 2015, when it passed legislation requiring coverage of medically necessary care for ASD. Since then, individuals diagnosed with ASD have had access to meaningful interventions, reducing their need for special education services, improving their quality of life, and opening doors for further education and employment.

Appropriate reimbursement rates are critical to establishing adequate provider networks. The existing Med-QUEST rates have not been adjusted since 2015. This has caused our member organizations to maintain wait lists for children who are in dire need of services and is in direct contradiction to the requirements of EPSDT.

According to the most recent estimates from the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in every 36 children is diagnosed with ASD. This means that 2% of Hawaii's children who are on Medicaid have an autism spectrum disorder and to date, many are unable to access the most basic, evidence-based treatments for their diagnosis. Because of this, we respectfully request that you pass HB2712, which appropriates funds to increase the reimbursement rates received by ABA service providers.

Thank you for your work in the past and moving forward to ensure that Hawaii's autistic children who are enrolled in Medicaid have access to life-changing, evidence-based care.

Respectfully,



Michael L. Wasmer
Chief Operating Officer
The Council of Autism Service Providers
mwasmer@casproviders.org
913-626-0668

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:41:14 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Smith	Positive Behavior Supports Corporation	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good afternoon,

Today, I am reaching out to champion the cause of families throughout the Hawaiian Islands who await crucial ABA services for their loved ones. Regrettably, these families continue to face barriers in accessing care, primarily because of lack of qualified providers. Based on firsthand knowledge of speaking with ABA professionals, many express their inability to work in the ABA field, attributing it to the present compensation rates and the elevated cost of living. The insufficient reimbursement rates from QUEST pose a significant challenge, as companies find themselves unable to compensate Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) and Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCaBAs/BCBAs) at levels proportionate with the current cost of living. This situation aggravates the struggle for families seeking essential ABA services for their loved ones.

Not only am I reaching out as an individual but as a representative of Positive Behavior Supports Corporation (PBS). As a company working with a large number of QUEST members, we strongly support the increase in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) rates for QUEST Medicaid in Hawaii. As a Clinical Director, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact that ABA therapy can have on individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

ABA therapy is a scientifically proven and evidence-based intervention that has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in improving the lives of individuals with autism. It is a tailored approach that focuses on addressing specific behavioral challenges and promoting skill development, leading to increased independence and quality of life for those receiving the treatment.

Despite the proven benefits of ABA therapy, the current reimbursement rates for QUEST in Hawaii are not reflective of the true costs associated with delivering high-quality ABA services. This discrepancy places a significant burden on providers, limiting their ability to attract and retain qualified professionals, invest in ongoing training, and maintain the necessary resources to deliver optimal care.

By advocating for an increase in ABA rates for QUEST, we can ensure that individuals with autism and their families have access to the best possible care and support. Adequate reimbursement rates will not only enable providers to deliver comprehensive and individualized

ABA services but also incentivize more qualified professionals to enter the field, ultimately expanding the capacity to meet the growing demand for these services.

Furthermore, investing in ABA therapy is an investment in the long-term well-being and inclusion of individuals with autism in the community. ABA has been shown to foster essential life skills, improve communication and social interactions, and enhance overall adaptive functioning. By providing sufficient financial support for ABA services through QUEST, we are contributing to the empowerment and integration of individuals with autism, promoting a more inclusive and compassionate society.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize and support the increase in ABA rates for QUEST in Hawaii. By doing so, we can make a significant positive impact on the lives of individuals with autism and their families, fostering a community that values and supports the unique abilities and contributions of every individual.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to your support in getting these matters resolved.

Julia Smith, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA

Clinical Director

Positive Behavior Supports Corporation

jusmith@teampbs.com



January 30, 2024

IN SUPPORT OF HB2712

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and all Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

I am writing **IN SUPPORT OF HB 2712**. ABA rates **MUST** be increased as outlined by the Milliman Rate Study <https://medquest.hawaii.gov/content/dam/medquest/docs/fee-schedule/HI%20ABA%20Rate%20Study%20-%2020231221.pdf>.

My name is Dr. Amy Smith Wiech, I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the Doctoral Level and I have been an ABA practitioner for over 30 years. I founded ABC Group in 2006, and we have been providing life-changing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatment to the children and families of Oahu for nearly the last 20 years. Approximately 50% of our clientele are MedQuest/Medicaid patients, with even more on our over 1 year long waitlist!

High quality, medically-necessary ABA treatment ameliorates the symptoms of autism by teaching toleration skills for difficult routines or tasks, teaching communication skills to replace maladaptive behavior, teaching pre-employment skills and life (such as social skills, conversational skills, following directions and written task completion skills) so that children/adolescents can be employable by the time they reach age 18 or 21, and as independent as possible. Amelioration of these symptoms can also push a kid back into general education classrooms to participate with their typically developing peers. They can have sleepovers and best friends, join Boy Scouts, and get jobs to support themselves! **It is a life-changing treatment!**



Autism Behavior Consulting Group, Inc. / ABC Group

Phone: 808-277-7736

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www.ABCGroupHawaii.com



20 years ago, in 2004, I started working with TRICARE as a sole BCBA provider here on Oahu to provide ABA treatment to military dependents. The rates 20 years ago for BCBA were \$37.50 (15 minutes), or \$125 an hour. The rates for “tutor” were \$12.50 (15 minutes) or \$50/hour (the term “tutor” would become what we know as an RBT when the BACB adopted this level of practitioner and created the first credential for RBTs in 2015).

In 2015, when MedQuest announced the rates for ABA treatment, MedQuest and commercial payers adopted these same publicly available published rates that were borrowed from the 2002-2004 TRICARE rates.

These ABA rates in Hawaii that were set on the 2002-2004 TRICARE rates, have remained nearly the same for the last 20 years, despite the cost of living in Hawaii skyrocketing over 68% in that same time. Additionally, Medical care inflation per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has increased 2% to 4% per year since 2004 for a cumulative increase of 88% over the last 20 years.

These current reimbursement rates do not leave us much left with to pay our overhead expenses at our clinic, provide staff pay increases to keep up with inflation, or even realize much of a profit. Our electric bill was just provided to us by our landlord and it is over \$7000 for last month alone!

When BCBAs or RBTs come to us asking for a raise, it is heartbreaking to hear that they cannot afford gas, or food for their families, so they need to go look for other work, and are leaving the field of ABA as they say this is a hard job without adequate pay. Hence the reason for high turnover in ABA, another variable adding to the costs that we endure is because our reimbursement rates are not enough to allow us to



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compensate them to live in Hawaii. The cost to an organization for losing an RBT is \$5000-7000 per RBT who leaves. This mirrors the attrition of BCBA's who cost an organization \$10,000-\$15,000 (or about 10-15% of their salary). **This attrition leads to increased costs to MedQuest, because with the attrition of RBTs or BCBAs, the duration for ABA treatment will be extended due to the inconsistency with RBTs/BCBAs and lack of providers to schedule in to replace those who have departed.**

Unique to the medical field, ABA providers are also burdened with the cost of training the candidates to become RBTs, training them on the job, whether an easy kid or a really challenging kid. There is no Remington College or Heald College for RBTs. It takes us about 8 weeks to get a candidate from interview to on the floor, working with a MedQuest kid. Again, contributing to a network adequacy problem.

Burnout is real folks. Staff are leaving the industry of ABA because this is very DIFFICULT work. Our reimbursement rates have not increased substantially in the last 20 years and the lack of meaningful increases in reimbursement rates leaves the industry unable to adequately compensate these dedicated, hardworking individuals!

How many of you could go without a pay raise for 20 years? At ABC Group, we are hitting a cost ceiling. Our net margins are abysmal. We are at a critical juncture.

Over the last 20 years we have been providing 1st Class Seats (or even seats in our Private Jet!) for the Economy Fares that MedQuest reimburses, and unfortunately we will be forced to change our high quality care model if you do not pass these rate increases that Milliman Rate Study outlined!



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This will force us to:

1. Discontinue paying our staff for quality-related non-billable time that allows us to make treatment more efficient, and more effective, therefore allowing for titration faster. It will just take us longer to get to the titration finish line.

This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

2. Discontinue intake of the most challenging patients that no other providers will intake, since intaking a severe kid requires the allocation of staff resources (much of those that are non-billable). It requires the allocation of RBTs who can “handle” those crisis behaviors when they arise, and is also a variable for staff burnout. When they are in crisis it costs us more money to staff that patient especially when they present with severe physical and severe behavioral challenges. These are your patients who unfortunately are on a future path to residential treatment which will cost the State of Hawaii upwards of \$350k per year per individual. **This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.**

3. Discontinue the intake of those challenging patients who cannot tolerate routine medical visits or exams and treatment, dental treatment, or have self- imposed dietary limitations that impact their daily health. The costs of mitigating these health challenges may be priceless to families.

This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

4. Discontinuing the items above will create a network adequacy issue for MedQuest as no other providers will take these patients now, and we already know there is a delay with waitlists where EPSDT requires services be provided without delay. Sadly this would force ABA providers like us to just only take the easy patients.



This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

The cost of doing business and living in Hawaii is the highest in all of the United States. Taxes, insurance, workers comp, mandated health insurance coverage, and costs of commercial real estate rents skyrocketing are forcing us to reexamine our business model unless we are able to persuade you to vote in support of this bill HB 2712.

This is make it or break it for us as an ABA provider, the children we serve and the families across our state.

Please pass this bill for the children and families living with autism across the State of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amy Wiech', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amy Wiech, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA
Executive Director and Founder
Licensed Behavior Analyst Since 2004



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HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 5:23:51 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

ABA has been a true " godsend" in terms of providing therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder. However, Hawaii has a shortage of providers and the fact that reimbursement rates have not changed in many years is one of the contributing factors. The provider shortage has prevented many children from accessing the services and that is extremely unfortunate to put it mildly. We believe that funding rate increases will definitely help build provider capacity, and so we are in support.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 8:07:18 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Palumbo	Pakolea Support Services	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

it has been come increasingly more and more difficult to higher quality candidates by offering a competitive wage.

our clinic has a waiting list of over a dozen clients and we cannot staff those clients, and therefore provide medically necessary services because it is difficult to hire with the less competitive wages.

In the last week, I have interviewed two people, one was an excellent candidate who truly wished to work in this field, however, because she would've needed to relocate with the wage offered, she could not make the move and had to turn down the job.

In addition, over the past two years, we have lost six, highly qualified staff members due to our inability to be competitive with Department of Education wages .

Please help us provide these medically necessary services to our Hawai'i keiki by increasing the Medicaid wage, and allowing us to provide competitive wages for staff.

Written Testimony

Committee on Human Services

Thursday, February 1, 2024 / 9:00 am
Conference Room 329, Hawai'i State Capitol

By

Christine K. Walton, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA
President, Behavior Analysis No Ka Oi, Inc.

HB2712– REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES' MED-QUEST DIVISION TO TAKE STEPS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT PROVIDER RATES ARE INCREASED FOR APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS SERVICES.

Chair Lisa Marten, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of** HB2712, which appropriates funding for the Med-Quest division for non-covered or under-covered behavioral health services for Med-Quest beneficiaries.

I am the President of Behavior Analysis No Ka Oi, Inc., a Kaka'ako-based clinic serving people with autism for over 15 years. At our clinic, we provide applied behavior analysis (ABA), a medically necessary, empirically validated treatment approach for children diagnosed with autism and other related disorders. Since the passing of Luke's Law in 2015, which requires health insurance coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism, there has been no change to the Medicaid fee schedule for ABA.

The operational costs of running a clinic have increased significantly since 2015. Specifically, costs related to rent, health insurance for employees, other employee benefits, and the IRS standard mileage reimbursement rate for employees who commute to the families' homes or other community sites have all increased.

As a direct result of no increases to the Medicaid fee schedule for ABA, we have been struggling with hiring. Interviewees request competitive wages, comparable to school-based services, which reimburse at a higher rate. We struggle not only with recruiting the best providers but also with retaining our most qualified providers, where several have relocated to the mainland, where the cost of living is lower, and fee schedules are higher. We are simply unable to serve clients due to the challenges of recruiting and retaining providers, resulting in a current wait list for services of approximately 3 years. While the passage of Luke's Law was a monumental advancement in securing services for the people of Hawai'i, it is not

impactful if those it was meant to ensure services for cannot find providers.

In conclusion, in order to provide medically necessary services, funding for the Med-Quest division for non-covered or under-covered behavioral health services for Med-Quest beneficiaries must be increased.



January 31, 2024

RE: HB 2712 – Relating to Autism

Committee on Human Services

Rep. Marten, Chair

Rep. Amato, Vice Chair

Reps. Au Belatti, Takenouchi, Ilagan, Nishimoto, Kobayashi, and Garcia

Dear Committee Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and Committee Members,

I am submitting this letter in **support of HB 2712 – Relating to Autism**, on behalf of Easterseals Hawaii and the families we serve. Easterseals Hawaii provides services including applied behavior analysis (ABA) to over 1,700 persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in nine locations statewide. Our purpose is to create a more equitable world where people with I/DD can choose their own path.

ABA is empirically validated, enables persons with I/DD to acquire essential daily living skills, and is thus considered to be the “gold standard” intervention for many individuals with I/DD and autism. As reflected in HB 2712’s statements, wage pressures are a significant barrier to effectively providing ABA services to everyone who needs them. Like many other ABA providers, Easterseals Hawaii has struggled to recruit and maintain essential staff for our programs because of these wage and cost pressures. Increasing med-QUEST ABA rates will alleviate pressure on programs like ours and enable us to more effectively serve the community so that Hawaiians with I/DD can acquire skills that enable them to live their best lives.

Easterseals Hawaii strongly urges you to vote in support of HB 2712.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter.

Handwritten signature of Andrea Pettiford in black ink.

Andrea Pettiford
Chief Executive Officer
Easterseals Hawaii

Handwritten signature of Rachel Liebert Lewis in black ink.

Rachel Liebert Lewis
Legislative Researcher and Policy Architect
Easterseals Hawaii



Committee on Human Services

Thursday, February 1, 2024
9:00 a.m.

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 329

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

STRONG SUPPORT HB2712 RELATING TO AUTISM

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Hawai'i Association for Behavior Analysis (HABA) we thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB2712 which appropriates funds to increase the funding for applied behavior analysis services for persons with autism** and requires the Department of Human Services to obtain maximum federal matching funds and pursue all other funding sources.

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is a medically necessary service provided for QUEST beneficiaries under the age of 21 with an autism diagnosis for intensive behavioral therapy (IBT), as mandated by section 1905(r) of the Social Security Act for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT). Autism is classified as a mental health condition, included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) and ABA treatment is the leading behavioral health treatment to ameliorate symptoms associated with this diagnosis and focuses on improving independence and decreasing the level of supports and services needed over the lifetime.

We thank the legislature for passing the concurrent resolution in 2023 which required the rate study for QUEST ABA rates. As noted in the final report ([DC233](#)), providers across the state have reported that recruiting and retaining a workforce has becoming increasingly difficult. Reimbursement rates for QUEST services were set in 2015 and have not increased, creating a hardship for behavioral health providers. This has resulted in significant delays for beneficiaries to access services, as well as not being able to meet the full service needs for children and families in our state. Additionally, some providers have reported not accepting QUEST or not taking on any new QUEST patients due to the below market reimbursement rates.

QUEST beneficiaries are too often faced with a lack of access to services across the state, especially on neighbor islands. Providers willing to accept QUEST report having to maintain waitlists, with families sometimes waiting for years to access their medically necessary

behavioral health treatment. Research demonstrates that early intensive intervention and provision of services in line with the [professional standards of care](#) for treatment dosage produce the best gains for individuals and can decrease the costs of care over the lifetime.

The state took great strides in the last legislative session to bring Medicaid payments to 100% of Medicare. Unfortunately for ABA providers, this did not include our services because the American Medical Association (AMA) Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) codes for ABA services are carrier priced, meaning the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) Medicare Physician Fee Schedule \(MPFS\)](#) do not currently set rates for our services. This has resulted in a lack of parity for these intensive behavioral health services in our state.

Due to low reimbursement rates and the high cost of living here in the islands, **there is a shortage of providers, creating provider network adequacy issues. An increase in reimbursement rates would allow providers to pay livable wages and create additional stable jobs to serve QUEST beneficiaries.**

We urge you to pass this bill to address the urgent need for increased rates for applied behavior analysis services for the Medicaid population. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Mahalo,



Kristen Koba-Burd, BCBA, LBA, CDP
Legislative Chair
Hawai'i Association for Behavior Analysis
Legislation@hawaiiaba.org



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

Committee on Human Services

Thursday, February 1, 2024
9:00 a.m.
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 329
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

STRONG SUPPORT HB2712 RELATING TO AUTISM

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2712**. BAYADA is a not-for-profit health care company committed to serving our community. We provide services across the state, with behavioral health services for QUEST members on Oahu and Maui.

As a behavioral health service provider, we have struggled to meet the needs of children with autism on Med-QUEST due to the increased costs of operating a business without increased rates for our services. QUEST rates for the coverage of intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) for treatment of children under 21 years of age with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), also referred to as applied behavior analysis (ABA), were set in 2015 and have not increased, despite the increased costs of living and increased costs for employers over the last 8 years. Wages have gone up nearly 30% since 2015 in Hawai'i, forcing businesses to shoulder the cost without proportionate rate increases, making it harder to attract candidates and businesses to the field of supporting individuals with autism and their families.

We appreciate the efforts taken in 2023 to pass the resolution and complete a rate study of ABA QUEST rates. During the rate study process, we participated in stakeholder meetings and completed the provider survey. Our experience in these meetings and the subsequent results of the rate study echoed our experience as an ABA provider in the state—**our rates do not allow us to serve the children with autism and their families who need us**. As an organization, our values are compassion, excellence, and reliability; however, due to difficulties in attracting and retaining staff we find ourselves troubled that we cannot consistently deliver these values to our clients. We're receiving more applications than ever, and offering more conditional offers, however we're seeing lower position acceptance or transition to hired. We have experienced increases in turnover due to staff needing to find higher paying jobs, often shifting to tourism instead of healthcare, to support themselves and their



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

families. We also see more and more staff who want to continue being an ABA provider choose to leave the state where they can make more and have a lower cost of living.

Currently, **we must maintain a waitlist for clients to access services because there is more demand than we are able to meet with our current providers.** At our Oahu location, 40% of those on our waitlist are QUEST members. At our Maui location, 66% are QUEST members. We closed our Big Island and Kauai insurance-based services, despite ongoing community need, due to losses based on unsustainable rates in 2018. These waitlists are only representative of our organization and are similar across providers.

We respectfully request the Committee pass this bill in support of increasing rates for what we believe are under-covered behavioral health services.

Mahalo,

Josliene Miller
BAYADA Behavioral Health

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:05:17 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvonne San Agustin	BECOHI	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services as it is essential for retaining qualified providers and addressing the rising costs of living. This will help ensure that children with autism can receive timely and necessary support without being hindered by waitlists.

LATE

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:13:20 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Lau	Autism Behavior Consulting Group	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of HB 2712. In order to maintain a workforce that provides this life changing service for children and their families, we need to keep up with inflation and the rising cost of maintaining the materials and supports that are required for safe and effective treatment.

Thank you for supporting this long over-due increase in reimbursement rates.

Respectfully,

Anne Lau, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA

Clinical Director

Autism Behavior Consulting Group

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 9:20:37 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Sato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Sara Sato and I was born and raised in Hawai'i. I have worked with individuals with disabilities in a variety of capacities since 1999 and have worked in the DOE, home, community, and clinic environments. I currently serve as the Clinical Director of an ABA agency in Honolulu, Hawai'i that employs approximately 30 staff.

There are many reasons why a rate increase is so important to us. First, as the minimum wage rates have risen and many other jobs out there are also raising their starting rates, we need to receive reimbursement at a rate that would allow us to attract top talent. The job of a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) is TOUGH. RBTs are implementing procedures day in and day out with learners who can engage in severe challenging behaviors such as head banging, aggression, PICA, self-injury, and elopement. Our RBTs are put through intensive training, required to implement procedures with fidelity, and ensure the safety and dignity of their learners while also ensuring their well-being. Our staff our dedicated, want to make a difference, and are so passionate about the success of our learners, but as I mentioned above, it is HARD work. From an objective stance, I can understand wanting to seek better pay in a job that requires less of you, to make ends meet. However, we want to retain staff who are passionate, want to put in the hard work, and truly make a difference. To provide quality care, we need to be reimbursed at an acceptable rate.

To provide quality care, there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes. Some tasks need to be completed when the client isn't present. For example, creating materials that will make it easier for the learner to understand. We need to meet as teams to discuss client progress, what can be better, and how to ensure consistency across team members. If additional training is needed that can't solely be accomplished in session with the learner, we are committed to paying for that time so that our staff our well trained and feel supported. These are just a few examples of where the reimbursement rate alone, doesn't cover it.

Finally, there is an overall shortage of ABA providers in the state. There are waitlists across agencies to provide services. We need to attract more people to the field so we can meet the needs of individuals with autism and their families. If the rates are not increased I am afraid that those providing ABA services in Hawai'i will decrease and this in turn will create an even bigger issue of more individuals and their families NOT receiving care at a critical point. This will put further strain on the state to provide care for an aging population. Please allocate funding to this

worthy cause. Please help us provide the best quality care possible so we can truly make a difference.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 9:40:17 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cardenas Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cardenas Pintor

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 10:04:24 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Paige Stegeman	Sharky Hearts Behavior Support Services	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. Additionally, rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state. I have personally lost several RBT's over the past year to relocation due to being unable to afford living cost.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 10:26:02 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josliene Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 11:25:51 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anastasia Keller-Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I support this bill because I have been a provider for over 30 years and have seen the need for services for our children, many of whom are growing up and aging in place with no benefits. We must address this rate change to ensure that providers can continue providing services. The rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015 despite increased living costs. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

Thank you,

Dr. Anastasia Keller-Collins

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 5:19:09 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dallas Star	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- I support HB 2712
- Rates for ABA services have remained the same for the last 9 years despite increased costs of living.
- ABA provides a career path in healthcare for our local communities starting with high school graduates, however many are choosing hospitality jobs or leaving the islands for better wages.
- Children with autism are being placed on waitlists during their most important years, due to the lack of available providers able to support providing these vital services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:04:21 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shusuke Aihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:54:23 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Letesha Driskell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA providers because I see that RBTs have to work two jobs to be able to make ends meet. They provide an invaluable service to children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities; however, are paid a wage that doesn't allow them to provide for themselves and their families. Please increase Medicaid ABA rates for the sake of our service providers, their families, and the families they serve.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 7:34:24 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Beth Goodell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider of ABA services, it has become increasingly difficult to staff cases due to low reimbursement rates. The duties of the direct staff can be incredibly difficult, and the amount we can pay is not substantial enough to hire and retain quality behavior technicians. Often, we see cases staffed with lesser educated workers who do not understand the complexities of autism and can do more harm to clients than good. I feel very strongly that we're watching our autistic population slip through the cracks, and there is solid data to support that observation.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 8:12:11 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Matthew Brink	Malama Pono Autism Centers	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Legislators,

I am writing in support of HB2712. Children with special needs such as autism are among the most vulnerable in our communities. Funding and support for children with autism has remained stagnant in the State of Hawai'i since 2015 and has left our current medicaid rates among the lowest in the country. Sadly, many of the families relying on Medicaid are Native Hawai'ian and vulnerable populations in our community.

Please support the most vulnerable children in our community. Please support HB2712.

Respectfully,

Dr. Matthew Brink

Malama Pono Autism Center

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:02:39 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Clack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the QUEST rate increase for ABA. This will have positive impacts for the community across consumers, families, clients, providers, and Hawaii businesses.

Thank you for your support!

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:03:35 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Geneva Leong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB2712 as this will benefit the community, families, consumers, and Hawaii businesses.

Thank you for your time.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:24:50 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maile Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state and I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:30:01 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Allison Schurtz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have personally experienced the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers. I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA services as current rates are the same since coverage began nearly ten years ago. With the increase in living costs on our islands, QUEST rates ABSOLUTELY need to increase as well so we can, as a community, meet the needs of the children across our state by providing a fair wage to those who provide ABA services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:34:54 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tammy A Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services because:

- As a provider, I have heard of agencies choosing not to accept QUEST insurance due to the lack of affordability in staffing and business operations.
- Having more providers who accept QUEST insurance will relieve many families who are on waitlists for services that they need.
- Rates have not changed since 2015 - a long eight years.

Thank you for accepting my testimony.

Tammy Chang, BCBA

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:36:07 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support increases in rates for ABA services. As an ABA service provider in the state of Hawaii I have seen waitlists to access services grow longer as we are unable to train and hire qualified providers to meet the growing demand. With increased rates we could offer more competitive pay and increase the work force in a much needed field, here in our community. Rates have not increased since 2015 despite the inflation and increased cost of living. We need to do better for our keiki. Thank you.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:36:46 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristopher McGill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:47:26 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers due to the rates being the same since 2015. I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:56:19 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eliza Lipp	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. This is crucial.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:06:02 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Erwin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support increasing the rate for ABA services. As a special education teacher, I work with many registered behavior technicians (RBTs) and see firsthand how much care they have for their clients. They are their biggest advocates and can really help my students become independent. I have seen so many of them leave due to lack of pay and needing to make more so that they are able to afford to live here. We have lost so many strong RBTs who have supported my classroom and students to other fields that have higher pay. For these reasons, I support increasing the rate.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:20:22 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacquelyn Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To support increases for QUEST rates for ABA services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:51:35 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joelle Dewater	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support a rate increase for ABA services because as a provider I have seen first hand the effects of difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support the efforts to increase QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:13:33 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jhunette Liwanag	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:40:47 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Osborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:52:25 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JULIET PABO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support to increase the QUEST ABA rates.

As rates of autism diagnosis have rapidly increased over the past few years, providers have struggled to keep up with the demand. Still, agencies, such as Bayada, have successfully retained talent by building new career pathways for employees, increasing pay, and creating a meaningful work environment. Providers, including Bayada, have ensured competent, compassionate and caring field workers who are trained annually to meet the needs of students and provide an environment where the students/clients can excel everyday.

While recruitment is essential to staffing applied behavior analysis (ABA) and autism services, providers prioritize retaining existing staff. Increasing QUEST ABA Rates would most definitely retain existing staff and field employees who work so very hard to assist students in accomplishing their academic and life skills goals.

Please pass this bill.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:55:07 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherri Nakamura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:14:50 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiana-Rae Vendetta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 12:40:29 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jabez Armodia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As an experienced ABA service provider, I have firsthand knowledge of the challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled professionals in this vital field. An increase in QUEST rates for ABA services is not only necessary but critical for ensuring the continuity and quality of care for those who need it most. Adequate compensation is essential to attract and maintain a workforce capable of delivering high-quality ABA services. This investment will directly translate into improved outcomes for our clients and a stronger support system for families and communities relying on these services.

Sincerely,

Jabez Armodia

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:25:13 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rochelle Tangonan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:37:54 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Sippos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:38:06 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Filkill	Pakolea Support Services	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 2:57:11 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kahaleno Kamalani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Members of the Committee,

Aloha,

My name is Kahaleno Kamalani, and I am a proud member of the Native Hawaiian community, as well as an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) service provider. I am writing to express my **strong support for HB2712** and its crucial role in ensuring adequate reimbursement for ABA services in Hawaii. This legislation is of utmost importance to our community, and I would like to share insights from both a cultural and professional perspective.

As a Native Hawaiian community member, I have witnessed the increasing need for ABA services to support individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) within our community. Hawaii, with its unique geographical isolation, presents challenges that require specific attention when it comes to healthcare services. We must address the pressing issue of lengthy waitlists for ABA services, hindering timely access to crucial interventions for our children. The demand for ABA services is high, and without proper reimbursement rates, we risk leaving many families without the support they desperately need.

The geographical isolation of our islands poses an additional challenge in attracting and retaining qualified ABA service providers. It is essential that reimbursement rates are increased to a level that allows providers to afford living and working in Hawaii. By doing so, we not only support the sustainability of existing services but also encourage experienced providers to stay in our state, bringing their expertise to benefit our community.

Moreover, the Native Hawaiian culture places significant emphasis on 'ohana' (family) and 'kokua' (help). Adequate reimbursement for ABA services under HB2712 aligns with these cultural values by ensuring that families in need receive the support required to help their children thrive. It is an investment in the well-being of our community and an acknowledgment of the unique challenges we face in our isolated setting.

By advocating for increased reimbursement rates, we are not only addressing the immediate needs of those on waitlists but also fostering an environment that attracts skilled professionals. This, in turn, empowers our community to build a sustainable network of ABA services that will benefit generations to come.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to support HB2712 and its mission to provide adequate reimbursement for ABA services in Hawaii. By doing so, we take a significant step towards ensuring that our Native Hawaiian community has access to the essential services needed for the well-being and growth of our children.

Mahalo nui loa for your attention and commitment to the well-being of our community.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 3:00:39 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheyenne F Chavez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. The agency I work for is always short-staffed on RBT's because of the low pay rate. More staffing would allow for more clients to receive the ABA services they need. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 3:41:57 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristin Le	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 3:48:07 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Krekel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

As a parent of a young adult with autism and an ABA provider, I strongly support an increase in QUEST (Medicaid) ABA rates. Rates for these ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

Sincerely,

Deborah Krekel

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 4:15:57 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tucker Clark	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a RBT working in the ABA field, I love my job and know my co-workers also do and are passionate about the work. However, it is unfortunate that it is still challenging to pay the bills and live with the current wage. This field also has a lot of last minute cancellations, and unexpected changes that effect the paychecks and pockets of employees in the field. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA so the passionate and patient people dedicated to this can continue living and making positive change in the world.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 4:39:10 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Skotz	Ho'omana Connections	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill 2712 because for providers to continue supporting autistic individuals and their families on this island, reimbursement rates need to match what we pay our staff and support the rising inflammation of so much that comes with owning a business in Hawaii. So many companies do not survive and then the families that we are trying to serve are the ones that suffer.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 4:53:05 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shanon Isokane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 4:59:54 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaitlin Preciado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am contacting you today to strongly support the proposed bill to increase the QUEST rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services in Hawai'i. In my role overseeing ABA services, I have comprehensively understood the challenges faced by practitioners and families within our community.

From an administrative perspective, one of the most pressing issues we face is the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified ABA providers. The stagnation of rates since 2015, despite the rising cost of living, has made it increasingly challenging to sustain a skilled and committed workforce. This inadequate compensation impacts the quality of services and contributes to longer waitlists, denying timely care to many needy children.

Moreover, I have observed the struggles of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) who are deeply passionate about their work yet find themselves constrained by financial limitations. The current remuneration does not reflect the high cost of living in Hawai'i, which has forced these dedicated professionals to reconsider their career choices for economic reasons.

Additionally, in my interactions with parents of children with autism, the recurring theme is their concern over the accessibility of quality ABA services. The shortage of providers, compounded by static rates, means many families are left waiting, unsure when their child will receive the necessary support. This situation is particularly disheartening as early intervention is crucial for the development of children with autism.

The proposed rate increase is a vital measure that addresses these multifaceted challenges. By enhancing the compensation for ABA services, we can attract and retain skilled professionals, reduce waitlists, and, most importantly, ensure that children with autism in Hawai'i receive the timely and practical support they deserve. This is not merely a financial decision but a commitment to the well-being and future of our community's children.

I urge you to consider the profound impact of this bill and lend your support to it. By doing so, you will contribute significantly to advancing ABA services in our state and, more importantly, to the lives of countless children and families who rely on these essential services.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Kaitlin Preciado

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 5:08:15 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beatrice Pujol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love my job but I struggle to make my rent payments on time. I want to stay in this field and keep my job but am currently looking at other options due to the pay. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state as well as the needs of our therapists.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 5:09:13 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kekoa Kamalani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 5:45:34 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Philip Sims	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:05:59 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Margaret Philpott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a former teacher, it is so important to support this bill. There are many children in need of these services. Please make the right choice and support these children.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:40:21 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dennise	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 6:52:03 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Bolgren	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider for those receiving ABA services through QUEST, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

Thanks,

Amanda Bolgren, MS, BCBA, LBA

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 7:12:56 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joan Malik	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please appropriate funds and adhere to the increase of funding based on thre 2023 medquest report. Opportunity for care, teaching and treatment for autistic children and young adults is critical! A dear friend runs ABA treatment business in Hawaii and this funding is critical for the survival of her longstanding business. Why would anyone work in a businesss that has not received an increase over the last 20 years? For the love of assisting in equal opportunity to everyone to obtain the skills for a productive livelihood, that is why! The state legislature needs to approve increased funding!! Do not let rates you reimburse remain at 2004 levels based on an almost 10'year old study! Support finding and pass this bill now! Mahalo!

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 7:13:18 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Annmarie Cihak	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi my name is Marie Cihak. I am a RBT. I support the bill to increase the pay of Quest ABA rates. As a RBT working 30 hours a week. I do not qualify for holiday pay, PTO, sick leave, bereavement, technology reimbursement, or mileage reimbursement. I currently work for a company in a school setting. I do not get paid a salary only hourly so I do not qualify for the following pays above because I do not work 40 hours a week. Also, if my client does not come to school, or does not have services available at home, or no assignments is available for me to sub I do not get paid.

I currently work to pay for groceries weekly and full tank of gas for the week. Imagine being a family of 7 and the money you make goes directly to paying for your family groceries and a full tank of gas. How you ask? I currently live in Hawaii and I make 27 dollars an hour at 30 hours a week. My groceries weekly cost is 630 plus that's if I am not trying to eat healthy it's more, then I pay about 70 dollars for a full tank of gas. That's only for a week. If I do not work I do get groceries for the week unless I take on a second job or side hustle. Obtaining a second job is an impossible task for me. I have school age kids with after school activities and I have a full time household to care of.

The cost of living in Hawaii for one person no kids to live comfortable is 70,000 to 100,000 a year. That is 31.25 a hour to 44.64 a hour working 40 hours a week for one person. Wow! Again, imagine what it would be for a family of 7. Our pay does not even come close to 70,000 a year. Although, we make ends meet the best that we can.

An increase to pay for those of us who do not collect a salary and or clients availability will benefit me as well as many others financially. Applying for unemployment is confusing and always get denied or pending during school breaks with no explanation or contact as to why. That is missed out money for my family. If we receive an increase it will no longer negate the need for us to claim unemployment when the school has Winter Breaks, Fall Break, Spring Break, and Summer Break. A pay increase is mostly definitely well deserved for those us who work with kids with autism as well teach etc. A lot of us go home with bruise from the work day,

and in a constant battle trying figure out how to make our clients life more easier and goals more obtaining while juggling or daily lives.

If teachers can get paid a salary, get pay increases, bonuses, and are paid during the holiday breaks so should RBTs, LBAs, BCBA's and all whom administer ABA services. I understand we do not all have the education, but we do have the experience and 95% of the time is teaching the kids more than the actually teachers that get paid to teach our clients. So do we need a pay increase yes of course we do. Approval of this bill to increase the rates will allow us to live comfortable in this economy and to continue to provide the phenomenal services that we provide to our clients on a daily basis.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 8:59:41 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Crystal Nelson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

As a BCBA and business cofounder I have directly dealt with the difficult process of hiring and retaining staff. The turnover rate is high due to inability to provide livable wages has had a detrimental effect on ABA service delivery.

I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 9:02:13 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Reynolds	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Anna Reynolds MA, BCBA, LBA, submit this testimony in support of HB2712. Due to the continued increase in the cost of living, in the state of Hawai'i, accompanied with the increase in all facets of living (e.g. housing, food, gas, etc) and running a business, whether corporate or private practice, the current reimbursement rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services, supply and demand are misaligned. Reimbursement rates for ABA services have remained stagnant, since 2015, as all other expenses have continued to increase. The results of this have been detrimental to the field of ABA, impacting the lives of patients and families who live with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and require medically necessary services, that we as Board Certified and Licensed Behavior Analysts provide in home and clinic settings. Currently, there is a deficit in ABA providers, from Registered Behavior Technicians to Board Certified Behavior Analysts. Without each of these levels of providers, ABA services cannot be effectively delivered, which in turn, costs the state more money, as services must be prolonged, as progress for patients and families, continue to struggle. Currently, the difficulty with hiring and retention of staff is largely, due in part to the low wages, for the difficulty of the work required to work within the ASD community. This includes reimbursement rates, and the often-cumbersome commutes to patients' homes. This has created exceptionally long wait lists for families to receive ABA services (e.g. 2+ years); especially on outer islands, where resources are exceedingly limited. Unfortunately, reimbursement rates are a main culprit, as individual providers, small businesses, and large corporations are unable to provide sustainable income for providers. Inflation rates have increased the cost of living, and all businesses have increased their rates, to keep up to speed with the current economy. This is evident from the cost of food, gas, housing and for businesses, the expense of simple office supplies to HR requirements. Individuals are no longer able to afford most necessities, including health insurance. The testimony for an increase in reimbursement rates for ABA providers does not come from greed, rather from desperation to remain vigilant within the field, to provide medically necessary services, to patients and their families. Rates of ASD diagnosis continue to increase, with no decline in sight. Please consider my testimony in support of HB2712, on behalf of myself, my colleagues and most importantly the families that we serve.

Kind Regards,

Anna Reynolds MA, BCBA, LBA

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:09:01 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Siyuan Wang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:14:42 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby Holden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Shelby Holden and as an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. I would love to stay in this field and I am truly grateful for the increases for QUEST (Medicaid) rates for ABA services, and I truly support increasing ABA rates.

Sincerely,

Shelby Holden

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 10:28:55 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie Mitchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

Jessie Mitchell, MA, LBA5

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/30/2024 11:19:21 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberlynn Galapon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. The cost of living in our state as well as the numerous waitlists are also other factors that would greatly benefit from increasing the rates to meet and keep up with our and the clients' needs.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 12:51:39 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mycal Sefo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services because as a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. Also, despite increased costs of living, rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 1:26:50 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandi Melchor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support bill HB2712 because rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:19:08 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Since 2015 when the funding for autism/medicare reimbursements was approved- the costs of providing autism services continue to increase. Students with autism often require different and more secure spaces and materials while they are receiving care to support daily living, communication, and learning activities. For private providers, the cost to procure and outfit these centers has continued to rise as inflation hit Hawaii and when added to the specialized training they must offer staff, centers find the costs to operate and provide for their employees continue to rise. This bill would help offset those costs and provide an opportunity for employers to better compensate employees and maintain or improve quality of care. Thank you for your positive consideration of this bill.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:27:37 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Hankins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I advocate for rate increases in ABA services. Since its coverage inception in 2015, ABA service rates have remained stagnant, failing to keep pace with the rising cost of living. This stagnation severely hampers providers' ability to attract and retain qualified staff. Consequently, children with autism requiring ABA services are forced onto waitlists, depriving them of crucial support.

It is imperative that we address this issue by increasing rates for ABA services in Hawaii. By doing so, we can ensure that Hawaii's autism community receives the vital support they deserve without unnecessary delays or barriers.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:31:52 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alissa Harris	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a behavior analyst that has practiced in the state of Hawaii for over 6 years, the biggest barrier to providing quality ABA services has been the need to continuously hire and train BCBA's and RBT's to work with our clients. The low rate of pay paired with high cost of living within a demanding field of work has reduced our ability to provide continuity of services with consistent treatment fidelity when trained staff leave and must be replaced with someone new to train to each client's individual treatment plan. Increased rates would help support providers and families alike to receive the necessary care and treatment of medically necessary services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:32:00 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kau Uwekoolani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services. As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:36:40 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharae Hawelu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In my role as a provider, I've observed the challenges inherent in recruiting and retaining qualified professionals, directly affecting the accessibility of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatment services for children with autism. Despite the increasing costs of living, the rates for ABA have remained unchanged since their coverage initiation in 2015. There is an urgent need for rate increases to adequately address the needs of children with autism in our state. I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:41:05 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Calixto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The amount of children being diagnosed with autism and needing ABA services is substantial. There are not many providers in this area to support the community as it is. With rates so low, it does not provide much incentive for RBTs to stay in the field. They are highly valuable in this field, go through training and preparation, and have to work long hours with children who are part of our most vulnerable population. These children need assistance with communication and often have moderate to severe dangerous behaviors such as aggression, self-injurious behavior, tantrums, and elopement. The job can create burnout and there are limited options for replacement of RBTs for families to relieve them. The RBTs have the passion and desire to work with this vulnerable population yet the pay does not match their responsibilities and they can be granted more elsewhere, leaving these children with not as much help as they need and deserve.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:55:19 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristen M Kagoshima	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 7:55:58 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Fredeluces	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:11:26 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Artaho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state. I support rate increases for ABA services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:18:41 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hanako Heine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:20:09 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dorian Tanginoa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:23:37 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Koenig	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:28:15 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debora Driscoll	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House Committee on Human Services,

I am concerned with the reimbursement rates for MedQuest ABA treatment. My dear riend is a provider and will be out of business soon if you do not increase these rates to reflect for the cost increases over the last 20 years. The rates you reimburse at are from 2004, that were adopted by Medquest in 2016.

Could you go 20 years without a pay raise?

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:34:55 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jason J Stauffer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As inflation and cost of living in Hawaii continue to grow, reimbursement rates for ABA services have not changed since 2015. It is crucial to pass rate increases for ABA services so providers can continue to do the work they are passionate about, and Hawaii's children can receive the medical care they need to live with as much dignity and independence as possible. Ethics, and economics, demand that HB2712 be passed.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:35:41 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ilikea Adams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the increase of rates for ABA services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:36:09 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maile Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- - - Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:42:50 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Torres	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:47:03 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melody Uluave	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

M.U.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:49:15 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elaine Newhouse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

At my current ABA company we are unable to retain staff do to QUEST's low pay. Almost all new hires end up working at the DOE due to their much higher pay. Unfortunately most of the children unable to get a full week a services/their recommended hours. Staff are unable to stay at the clinic due to the very high cost of living in the state of Hawaii. Children deserve to get the services they need do be able to learn life skills and grow with their families/Community.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:56:17 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Logan Gonzaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello, my name is Logan and I am an RBT. I support HB2712 for a couple of reasons: 1) as the economy raised its prices on commodities such as food and gas as well as minimum wage, our RBT wages have remained the same, so I am working the same for less items, and 2) although behavior services are in high demand, I am looking for other part time jobs to supplement the income needed to live a subpar lifestyle in Hawaii.

By raising the RBT rates with medicaid (quest), it would allow me to have a little more breathing room to spend time with my family and girlfriend. It would also prevent healthcare burnout with a field that already has high stress. I support HB2712.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:59:04 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Elento	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha, Rep. Lisa Marten, Chair, Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Human Services,

I ask your consideration to direct the Department of Human Services to amend the Medicaid state plan to eliminate the unlawful age cap of age 20 for Applied Behavior Analysis autism services. The age limit has no basis and is discriminatory due to disability -- autism. Treatment must be based on medical necessity.

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 8:59:25 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Faith Kahakelii	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am currently a BCBA at a private ABA clinic in Honolulu, Hawaii. I started in the field as an RBT and have struggled to sustain a living on the yearly income in and RBT and BCBA position. Although I love working in this field, over the years I have had to work multiple jobs to maintain the cost of living. Although I am at a higher level now, mya family and I are still considering leaving the state and also professions due to the low wages in the field.

LATE

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:04:35 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Lori de Crinis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the current state of autism services in the Hawaiian Islands and the urgent need for a rate increase to attract and retain qualified providers. As the Director of Autism Services at Imua Family Services on Maui, I have had the privilege of working closely with individuals and families affected by autism, and it is evident that the current challenges in service provision are hindering the well-being of our community members.

The Hawaiian Islands, known for their breathtaking landscapes and vibrant culture, unfortunately face a critical shortage of autism service providers. This shortage has a *profound* impact on the quality of life for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families, as they struggle to access the specialized care and support they desperately need.

The primary issue contributing to this shortage is the insufficient reimbursement rates for autism services. Providers are faced with the economic reality that delivering high-quality, specialized care for individuals with autism is **financially unsustainable**. As a result, many talented professionals are discouraged from practicing in the Hawaiian Islands, exacerbating the shortage and leaving families with limited options for care.

A rate increase is imperative to address this crisis and make the Hawaiian Islands an attractive destination for **skilled autism service providers**. By aligning reimbursement rates with the true cost of delivering effective autism services, we can create a more sustainable and competitive environment for professionals in the field. This, in turn, will not only attract new providers but also encourage existing ones to stay and invest in the local autism community.

Moreover, the benefits of a robust autism services network extend beyond the immediate impact on individuals with ASD and their families. Adequate support and intervention contribute to improved educational outcomes, increased social integration, and a reduction in the long-term burden on the healthcare system.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the urgent need for a rate increase in autism services in the Hawaiian Islands. By taking this crucial step, we can foster an environment that attracts and retains dedicated providers, ultimately ensuring a brighter future for individuals with autism and their families.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I am available to discuss this issue further and collaborate on viable solutions to address the challenges facing our community.

Dr. Lori de Crinis, BCBA, LBA99

LATE

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:21:58 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristian Guynes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services.

LATE

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 9:46:27 AM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kylie Teramoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

LATE

HB-2712

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 2:35:52 PM

Testimony for HUS on 2/1/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Kahunahana	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Hawaii State Legislatures,

My name is Nicole Kahunahana and I have been a Registered Behavioral Technician for the past two years. I served as a teacher for the past 10 years and recently decided to continue my education to pursue a license in the field of ABA as a behavioral analyst. It has become more apparent that there is an increase in children who are diagnosed with autism. The amount of ABA services available does not match the need of the community. Currently, I am serving in an FSC special education room and we have 2 students who are in need of ABA services. Unfortunately, the school is unable to provide them with the necessary services because of the lack of funding. There are many families, teachers, and especially students who would benefit from being provided the services they need if it was provided and covered by their insurance plans. Many families in Hawaii rely on QUEST-Hawaii to provide medical and other services for their keiki.

Thank you for taking time to consider my testimony and I pray that you would continue to provide the best opportunities for the future generations of Hawaii to thrive.

Mahalo & God Bless,

Nicole Kahunahana