

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

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

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

April 3, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [HB 2712 HD1](#) – RELATING TO AUTISM.

Hearing: April 4, 2024, 10:15 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill as long as the appropriations do not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Executive Supplemental Budget Request for FY2025.

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds to increase the funding for applied behavioral analysis (ABA) services for persons with autism. Requires the Department of Human Services to obtain maximum federal matching funds and pursue all other funding sources. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The House Committee on Human Services (HD1) amended this measure by changing its effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

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),

April 3, 2024

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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).

To reiterate, DHS only supports an appropriation if it does not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Executive Supplemental Budget Request for FY2025. Also, DHS prefers that any appropriation be included in the executive budget bill as a recurring expense as opposed to a bill so the appropriation could be recurring and the increase ongoing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 9:58:49 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Smith	Testifying for 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.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:27:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Faith Kahakelii	Testifying for Behavior Analysis No Ka Oi	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a clinician in the field, I have seen the difficulty in and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase 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 strongly support rate increases for ABA, as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who has been closely involved in the field for over 10 years, I can attest to the critical importance of adequately compensating ABA professionals for their expertise and dedication to improving the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

ABA therapy is widely recognized as one of the most effective interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities. Its evidence-based practices have consistently demonstrated significant positive outcomes in improving communication, social skills, behavior management, and overall quality of life for those receiving services.

However, providing high-quality ABA therapy requires a considerable investment of time, resources, and expertise. RBT professionals undergo extensive education and training to acquire the necessary skills to implement individualized treatment plans tailored to the unique needs of each client. Additionally, ongoing professional development and supervision are essential to ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of ABA interventions.

Despite the invaluable contributions of ABA professionals, the current reimbursement rates often fail to reflect the true cost of delivering quality services. Inadequate compensation not only undermines the sustainability of ABA programs but also jeopardizes the ability of providers to attract and retain qualified professionals, ultimately compromising the quality of care provided to individuals and families in need.

A rate increase for ABA services is not only warranted but also imperative to address the growing demand for quality care and to support the continued growth and development of the ABA workforce. By adequately compensating ABA professionals, we can ensure the availability of high-quality services that empower individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

I urge you to carefully consider the significant impact that a rate increase would have on the accessibility and quality of ABA services within our community. Your support in advocating for fair and equitable reimbursement rates is crucial in advancing the field of ABA and promoting the well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:46:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Libby	Testifying for Mau Loa Learning LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB2712 and the proposed increase in ABA rates. As a provider within the ABA community, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges associated with hiring and retaining qualified professionals in this field. The current rates provided under QUEST do not adequately reflect the value of the services provided nor do they address the rising costs of living.

Increasing ABA rates is essential for ensuring that individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) receive the high-quality care they deserve. As a BCBA, I am passionate about the work I do, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a career in this field with stagnant reimbursement rates. By supporting this bill, we can make meaningful strides towards ensuring that ABA providers are fairly compensated for their expertise and dedication.

Furthermore, raising ABA rates will enable more children in our state to access these critical services. As a parent, I understand the importance of early intervention and the positive impact that ABA therapy can have on the lives of individuals with ASD. It is imperative that we prioritize funding for ABA services to reduce waitlists and provide timely support to those in need.

In conclusion, I urge you to support HB2712 and advocate for the increase in ABA rates. By investing in the ABA workforce and expanding access to services, we can empower individuals with autism to reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Christina Libby, M.S., BCBA, LBA

CEO and Founder, Mau Loa Learning LLC

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:24:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy D. Wiech	Testifying for ABC Group Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB 2712

Dear Finance Committee,

I have submitted written testimony in support for all hearings on this topic this session and have testified in support on Zoom once. As a long time provider in Hawaii who has felt this constriction for many, many years, this rate increase is the one thing that will allow us to continue to help families affected by ASD in Hawaii. 2002-2004 rates do not work, and have not worked for many years.

Please pass this rate increase so that we can be a sustainable resource in Hawaii for years to come. Our future is in jeopardy without these increases to account for inflation and cost of living and doing business increases over the last 20 years!

Sincerely,

Amy Wiech, PhD, BCBA-D, Licensed Behavior Analyst

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:28:09 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a community member, BCBA, and cofounder of a non-profit clinic for children with Autism i support this bill. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. 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.



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 4, 2024
10:15 am
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 211
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

SUPPORT HB2712 HD1 RELATING TO AUTISM

Honorable Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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 HD1 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.

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.

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. **Investing in access to services when children are young decreases costs needed to support individuals across the lifespan.**

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 WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 4, 2024

10:15 am

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 211

State Capitol

415 South Beretania Street

SUPPORT HB2712 HD1 RELATING TO AUTISM

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2712 HD1**. 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



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

instead of healthcare, to support themselves and their 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



April 2, 2024

RE: HB 2712 – Relating to Autism

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Senators Henry J.C. Aquino, Lynn DeCoite, Troy N. Hashimoto, Lorraine R. Inouye, Dru Mamo Kanuha, Michelle N. Kidani, Donna Mercado Kim, Chris Lee, Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Glenn Wakai, and Kurt Fevella, Committee Members

Dear Committee Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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 provided services including applied behavior analysis (ABA) to over 2,300 persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) statewide in 2023. 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

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 3:51:44 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
BTSH	Testifying for BTSH	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider and a representative of a provider agency, I am in support of HB2712. With the cost of living already too high (increasing), inflation, and the decreased employee pool, it has become very difficult to staff qualified providers to support children with special needs (autism in particular for this purpose) through ABA. Due to the reimbursement rates staying low, Medicaid has set a precedence to pay providers a lower rate than providers can achieve working in other industries. Providers in this industry have resorted to hiring staff that are not dedicated to staying in Hawaii and are not dedicated to making this industry a career move rather than a temporary job. I urge the representatives and law makers of Hawaii to improve our industry standards and improving the quality of services by improving the quality of employment for ABA. Help keep dedicated ABA providers here in Hawaii and help service the children of Hawaii. Mahalo.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 9:17:21 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rex Jakobovits	Testifying for Experiad LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My Honolulu-based software company provides services for ABA therapy providers. I've seen the difference that ABA makes in our keiki's lives and I support this bill so that more children in our state can access ABA.



MALAMA
P O N O
AUTISM
CENTER

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 for over a decade and has left our current Medicaid rates among the lowest in the country.

As healthcare providers we are conducting business in the most expensive state in the country, among the highest taxes and labor costs. The only way to sustain a business in this climate is to prioritize the highest funding sources. Medicaid is currently the lowest funding source and as such those families are placed on waiting lists and denied access to much needed healthcare.

We have a responsibility to prioritize the most vulnerable among us. HB 2712 allows us to do that.

Thank you for your support of the vulnerable children with autism in our community.

Respectfully,



Dr. Matthew Brink

Malama Pono Autism Center

Hawaii Senate
Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

April 3, 2024

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

Esteemed Chair San Buenaventura Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I write you today on behalf of The Council of Autism Service Providers (CASP) in support of HB 2712. CASP is a non-profit trade association of autism service provider organizations that have a demonstrated committed to promoting and delivering evidence-based practices for individuals with autism. CASP represents the autism provider community to the nation at large, including government, payers, and the general public. CASP provides information, education, and promotes the generally accepted standards of care for applied behavior analysis, ABA.

Of particular interest to our members is the coverage of evidence-based care in both private health insurance plans as well as through Medicaid. Timely access to medically necessary treatment, including applied behavior analysis, is critical for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).¹

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.

This coverage includes children under the age of 21 who are enrolled in MedQUEST, assuring access to medically necessary care pursuant to Medicaid's Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) mandate and CMS' Informational Bulletin on Clarification of

¹ The American Academy of Pediatrics has long recognized that immediate intervention is critical in the treatment of autism. Pediatrics, Vol. 120, No.5, Management of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (2007), p. 1163.
46_dmhc_regs.pdf

Medicaid Coverage of Services to Children with Autism.² EPSDT requires that these services be provided **without delay**. The previously referenced CMS bulletin states:

*EPSDT also requires medically necessary diagnostic and treatment services. When a screening examination indicates the need for further evaluation of a child's health, the child should be appropriately referred for diagnosis and treatment **without delay**. Ultimately, the goal of EPSDT is to assure that children get the health care they need, when they need it – the right care to the right child at the right time in the right setting.*

The role of states is to make sure all covered services are available as well as to assure that families of enrolled children, including children with ASD, are aware of and have access to a broad range of services to meet the individual child's needs.

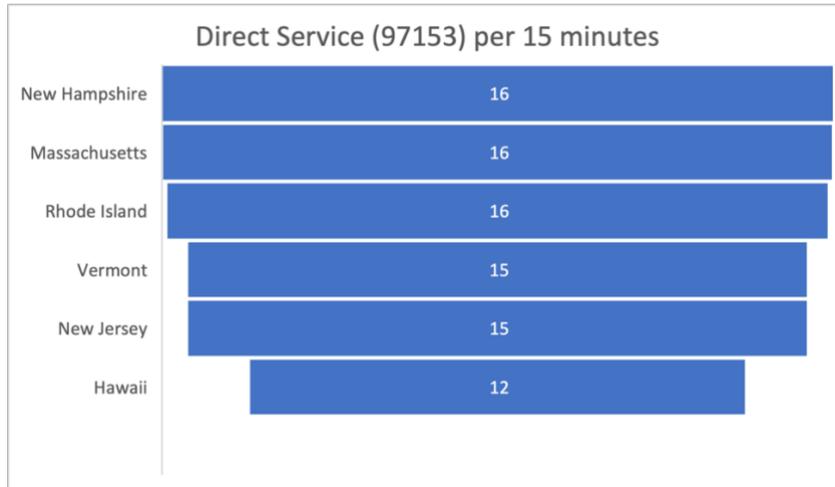
Ensuring an adequate network is established by offering appropriate rates is critical. The existing MedQUEST rates have not been adjusted since 2015, even though the cost of providing these services has skyrocketed. This has caused our member organizations to maintain wait lists for children who are in dire need of services and is in direct contradiction to the requirements of EPSDT.

Additionally, as indicated below, other states with similar costs of living have rates that are more in line with economic forces and many of these states also allow for concurrent billing of CPT codes 97153 and 97155, consistent with guidance from the American Medical Association CPT codebook³ and the ABA Coding Coalition.⁴

² Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services. Informational Bulletin, Clarification of Medicaid Coverage of Services to Children with Autism, July 7, 2014 (hereinafter "CMS Informational Bulletin"), available at <http://www.medicaid.gov/Federal-Policy-Guidance/Downloads/CIB-07-07-14.pdf>.

³ AMA Current Procedural Terminology, CPT 2022 Professional Edition, pg. 815 "97155: Adaptive behavioral treatment with protocol modification, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional, which may include simultaneous direction of technician, face to face with one patient, each 15 minutes."

⁴ www.abacodes.org



According to the most recent estimates from the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in every 36 children⁵ is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. This means that more than 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.

On behalf of CASP and our member organizations serving individuals with autism in Hawaii, we ask that you pass HB2712, which appropriates funds for increased reimbursement rates for ABA service providers. Thank you for your work in the past and moving forward to ensure that all MedQUEST beneficiaries, including children with autism, have access to life-changing, evidence-based care.

Respectfully,



Mariel C. Fernandez, M.S., BCBA, LBA (TX)
Vice President of Government Affairs
The Council of Autism Service Providers
mfernandez@casproviders.org
334-332-2504

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm-community-report/executive-summary.html>

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 7:03:01 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacey Kuhn	Testifying for Kuhn Behavioral Consulting	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

Written Testimony

Committee on Human Services

Thursday, April 4, 2024 / 10:15 am
Conference Room 211, 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 Senator Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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.



Hawai'i Psychological Association

For a Healthy Hawai'i

P.O. Box 833
Honolulu, HI 96808

www.hawaiipsychology.org

Phone: (808) 521-8995

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

LATE

March 18, 2024 1:00 P.M. Conf Rm 225 & via Video conference

Testimony in Support of HB2712 HD1 RELATING TO AUTISM

The Hawaii Psychological Association (HPA) strongly supports HB2712 HD1 to increase funding to maximize Medicaid coverage for applied behavioral analysis (ABA) services for children with autism.

Since Psychologists are frequently a part of ABA care teams, we understand and strongly support the utility of ABA for families with autistic children. ABA services for children are essential for effective care; as well as long-term costs-saving for their families.

However, there are not enough providers in Hawaii. The limited availability of providers has been exacerbated by the markedly low reimbursement rates provided by Medicaid for their services. The reimbursement rates for applied behavioral analysis services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite marked increased costs of living in Hawaii. Accordingly, practitioners are finding more financially beneficial opportunities in other practice venues and states - leaving too many economically disadvantaged children on MedQuest without services.

Providers within our membership have seen first-hand the difficulty agencies have in hiring and retaining qualified providers. Without providers to perform these necessary services, behavioral difficulties worsen and Hawaii's families are further burdened.

The state should use every effort and expend what is necessary to draw down the largest federal contribution as possible so we can maximize our resources and do what's best for our families. This bill will help move children with autism off waitlists so they can gain access to services they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important bill.

Sincerely,

Raymond A Folen, Ph.D., ABPP.
Executive Director

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 9:54:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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, LBA, LMHC

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 9:56:30 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified front line providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA to provide the medically and educationally necessary services of our keiki in Hawaii.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:18:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beatrice Pujol	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 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. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:25:24 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mathew Frank	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House Committee,

I will be very frank in my testimony. The Hawaii Department of Education offers vendors a rate of \$75 an hour on outer islands for ABA services within the public school setting. This is a 50% Increase in rate than Medicaid. Without an increase in rate, the competition will continue to be dominated by the DOE and there will be fewer providers to work with the citizens of Hawaii with disabilities during the daytime and afternoon. The Department of Health needs to match the rates delivered by the Hawaii Department of Education to allow for parity In the ABA job market and the ability to compete with higher wages offered in the DOE. As well, more and more providers opening in Hawaii are dedicating their human capital solely to DOE creating further disparity.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:34:40 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly McCloskey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because I have a child with autism and this impacts his services

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:39:44 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a provider who has worked in field of autism and developmental disabilities for over 10 years, I strongly support this bill. Medicaid rate increases are necessary to hire and retain quality staff to deliver effective services and care individuals and families in need in our community.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:08:15 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Adam Clemente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill for QUEST rate increases

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:29:22 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

In order to ensure that individuals with ASD are supported and provided with services that will increase their independence and therefore decrease the need for ongoing public funds, please consider supporting this bill so that more providers will accept clients.

Thank you,

Anastasia Keller-Collins, PHD, BCBA-D, LBA

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 12:06:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Tse	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. Additionally, I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. Lastly, 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 12:09:23 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Salanga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. In order to afford any time working with my children, I have to work two additional jobs to support my life and my family. This causes burnout and prevents me from being the most effective RBT for my kids without taking time off, which in turn causes inconsistencies and unnecessary schedule changes for my kids.

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. I love working with my kids and have seen the growth each of them has made throughout my time with them. Our waitlist is long and our staff turnover is high. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 12:27:36 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Noochan	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.
- I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.
- 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 12:35:19 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

I love the field of ABA and love helping others, and would love to continue in this field, but can be very difficult to maintain as I cannot afford my rent due to the RBT pay. ABA can be so beneficial for individuals with autism and their families, and will benefit society as a whole due to increasing pro social behaviors in children we help, but at this pay rate, not many people can continue working in this field. Many people in this field are very passionate about helping others, but we also need to look out for ourselves and our own financial needs. If the number of ABA workers decrease due to the lack of pay, it will affect many people, not just individuals with autism, but society as a whole, as there will be more individuals in society who will not learn how to behave appropriately and in pro social ways. Please help keep ABA alive and thriving.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 12:57:43 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maria Angela Caslib	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a parent of a child who receives ABA. I've seen the difference it makes in their life and I support this bill so that more children in our state can access ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:27:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a community member, BCBA, and cofounder of a non-profit clinic for children with Autism i support this bill. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:37:00 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryan Ito	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a parent and my daughter has received and currently receives ABA. Our family, friends and us as parents have seen significant differences in our daughter's life and well being. Our daughter was unable to communicate effectively, cause self harm, and harm others. She was fighting with herself every day and night.

After ABA she is now communicating and happy. She enjoys life and is able to build relationships with peers, neighbors and most importantly, her family. It took about 10 years of intensive ABA, but we can see that her supports and healthcare costs for the rest of her life will be significantly less than the trajectory she was on prior to ABA.

I support this bill to provide more children in our state to have access to ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:37:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 1:59:34 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Burdt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Maui supporting families and children with autism, I strongly support this bill. There are not enough QUEST providers, resulting in long delays to access services and children not being able to access the full recommended hours. Please pass this bill to help address the provider shortages across the state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 2:23:19 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

In my role as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) deeply embedded in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), I am reaching out to express my strong endorsement of the legislation aimed at raising QUEST rates for ABA services. My advocacy is grounded in comprehensive observations of the remarkable benefits that ABA provides to children with autism and the obstacles encountered by their families and the dedicated Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) who serve them. It is imperative that this bill be passed to address the significant challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled ABA practitioners and ensuring they receive equitable compensation, which will, in turn, extend critical services to a wider population of children with autism.

The stagnant rates since 2015 have markedly limited our potential to deliver premium care and properly reward our devoted team members, including RBTs and my fellow BCBA's. The ongoing increase in living costs compounds these issues, undermining our commitment to maintaining the superior standard of care that is our hallmark.

From my vantage point in the profession, I have been fortunate to see the transformative power of ABA therapy on the lives of children and the immense hope and comfort it offers to their families. There is a pressing need to make these services more widely available. By increasing the rates, we can open doors for more families to access ABA, thus ensuring that a myriad of children receive the vital support they need for a hopeful and improved future.

Support for this bill signifies more than just a financial investment; it reflects a pledge to the growth and development of our children and a salute to the professionals who dedicate their lives to this cause. Moving this bill forward is essential for reducing waitlists and providing prompt access to ABA services, significantly enhancing the lives of children with autism and their loved ones.

I advocate for your backing of the proposal to uplift QUEST rates for ABA services, a step towards creating a more inclusive and supportive setting for children with autism and a recognition of the noble efforts of ABA professionals.

I am keen to engage in discussions on how we can together effectuate a substantial, positive change. Your consideration of this critical matter is greatly appreciated, and I look forward to your support in this endeavor. Thank you for contemplating this significant proposal.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 3:17:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As inflation and cost of living in Hawai'i 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 Hawai'i'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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 3:56:11 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashley Lingat	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

ABA services can increase the livelihood of children with autism and we need our ABA providers to be paid adequately to continue providing for those they serve.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 4:01:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 4:04:25 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 4:06:35 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

As a provider I have personally seen the challenges in hiring and retaining qualified providers due to the lack of compensation from QUEST Rates. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can access the quality services they deserve.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 5:04:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Elento	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB2712 increase Medicaid payrate and add ABA for individuals age 21 and older who have autism and need ABA.

Aloha,

Individuals who are 21 and older and diagnosed with Autism need to benefit from an increase in rate of pay for Applied Behavior Analysis through their Quest Medicaid health plan.

Since ABA coverage under Medicaid ends at age 21, **we need HB2712 to include ABA, and specified as approved services for individuals 21 and older under the state Medicaid Plan/Quest health plans.** Without this provision this pay rate increase is meaningless or devastating to individuals 21 and older.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit personal testimony.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 5:11:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Taylor Isono	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.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 5:29:48 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynette Clemente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

AS an RBT, I LOVE the work I do, but it is difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase the rates for ABA.

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

I fully support rate increases for ABA so more children with Autism can move off the waitlists to access the services they need and deserve.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 5:44:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josliene Miller	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. 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 5:46:53 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shanda Strickland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please consider passing this bill. There are numerous factors impeding qualified workers to stay and/ or entering this field when wages are low. Agencies and providers are unable to compete with inflation and effectively recruit when fast-food chains pay the same or more. This crisis is severely impacting the ABA field and our community.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 5:57:14 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jordyn Reeser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support an increase in rate for ABA services.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 6:27:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amber Wright	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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 6:34:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists and finally get the services they need and deserve.

This is long overdue so I'm proud to see Hawaii finally making strides in the right direction to serve ALL of our children.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 7:24:10 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Casella	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an rbt, i really love what I do and the whole job in general i enjoy but the cost of living here is very difficult. Please support this bill to increase the rates for aba services.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 7:53:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Riedlin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am an RBT and I want to continue making a difference in my client's lives, and increased rates for ABA would help me in doing so.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 8:14:15 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharon Blanchard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a parent of a child who receives ABA. I've seen the incredible difference it makes in their life and I strongly support this bill so that more children in our state can access ABA.

It took my child 15 months of waiting to receive ABA services....the wait was awful. No child or parent should have to endure that and yet so many do because they have no choice but to wait. Or else they leave HI, if they have the means and ability to do so, in order to obtain the services needed for their autistic child.

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

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.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Blanchard

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 8:35:19 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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 and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) service provider, as well as a lifelong constituent of Mililani. I am writing in **strong support of HB2712**. This bill plays a 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 9:05:46 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MaryAnn McDonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In order to support our children with autism, I support increased rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:18:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Kealaiki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a parent of a child who receives ABA. I've seen the difference it makes in their life and I support this bill so that more children in our state can access ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:27:07 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Watanabe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislative Committee,

As an RBT, I am really passionate about the work I do, however, it is difficult with the cost of living here in Hawaii. I support rate increases for ABA so all children with autism can get off the waitlists and access the services they need. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

Thank you!

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:51:13 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sarah Warner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love working working with children and being a part of their support system. Although I love what I do, the cost of living is very high in Hawaii and I support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:04:25 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

As a provider of ABA services for the past 9 years here in Hawaii, I have observed great RBTs leave the field due to the cost of living. A rate increase will allow companies to retain qualified providers and allow kids to receive their needed services. I support an increase in QUEST rates for ABA.

Thank you for your time

Amanda Bolgren

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:19:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheyenne F Chavez	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 provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

Hawaii State Legislature

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 4, 2024

10:15 am

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Conference Room 211

State Capitol 415 South Beretania Street

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

My name is Joslyn Howanyk, and I am a registered behavior technician (RBT) graduating next month with a master's degree in special education. I am also collecting hours to sit for the BCBA exam. I have been an ABA practitioner for 11 years, and 10 of those years have been on Oahu. I work for Kuhn Behavioral Consulting Services.

I am testifying IN FAVOR of HB2712.

The services ABA practitioners provide affect not only the lives of children with autism, but every family member in the household, caregiver, teacher, or any other individual who interacts with the child. ABA services are CRUTIAL. It is a difficult and demanding field and work does not stop when we get home. Practitioners spend many unpaid hours creating resources for our clients while making only a few dollars more than minimum wage in California or night shifts at Taco Bell on Oahu.

I teach children important things like not to bang their heads into the wall or shove their baby sibling down the stairs when they are angry by teaching them safe alternative ways to express their anger, and I only make a few dollars more than an individual who works in a fast-food restaurant. Why haven't our wages gone up when the cost of living is so high?

Burnout is real, and our field is struggling to keep quality providers because we are underpaid and overworked. There are more children in need than there are ABA providers because not many people are willing to work as hard as we work for the income we receive. Autism is not

going away, and these children need us, but providers also need to eat and have shelter. We as providers must have our needs met too so we can continue to meet the needs of others.

Please vote in support of bill HB 2712

Sincerely,

Joslyn Howanyk

Kuhn Behavior Consulting Services

Joslynhowanyk@kuhnbc.com

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 5:10:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emaley McCulloch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a parent of a child who receives ABA, I support this bill so that more children and families can access care.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 5:38:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Meza	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 have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA as those around me who work in this field come home exhausted after a day's work. It's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 6:07:39 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leanna Roberts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, working with these kids has been a fulfilling experience. I love my job and watching the growth and progress of each individual. However, with inflation and the current cost of living, I have seen burnout amongst my colleagues due to stress from difficulties making it through the day. Many of us have to work evening and even weekends to make ends meet. In order to help our clients further their progress, it is important that the caregivers providing services are able to sustain themselves. I support this bill so that clients are able to get high quality services.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 6:51:18 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lana Bilbo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support substantial, regular wage increases so that more children with autism can move off of waitlists AND their service providers can make ends meet. Wages have remained the same since 2015, and we know that there has been an incredible rise in our cost of living since then. This is causing a significant barrier to Kauais ability to serve children with autism. Please increase these wages by a significant jump this year, and continue to increase them annually so our children can receive the essential, life changing medical services they require.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 8:09:08 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christian Arango	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 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. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 8:14:04 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josel Cristobal	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.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 8:38:13 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Inflation is here to stay! The prices of goods and services are affected by inflation. The CPI (CPI from the 1930's-1980's) indicates that we pay more tax, spend less on goods/services, and pay more for rents and daily activities. During Covid, minimum wage had an increase, however, as RBT's, our pay has remained the same, which makes it extremely difficult to buy basic necessities such as rice. A 50 pound bag of rice was \$28 before covid, however, 4 years later it is \$38, which is 35 percent more than what it was. Now imagine that happening to all of our goods and services. Then, imagine paying for a grocery list from 4 years with the same amount of money from 4 years ago because I can; it doesn't work.

I love helping this population (ASD population), however, with the constraints on the RBT wage, it makes it difficult to stay in this profession. I am in support of HB2712 because it will allow me to buy the most basic necessities to live and function here in Hawaii. To continue to foster a caring and thriving ASD community, increases in RBT wages is must.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:03:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bonniebrooke Bullock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

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

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:04:02 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tracy Lui	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I disagree with this rate increase. The private providers are paying barely qualified RBTs to service high needs students and they are overcharging the DOE for the services. The EA's that are hired and working for the DOE are better qualified and payed nearly half the pay that RBTs are being provided. RBT's should require significantly more pay for this inflated pay.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:21:34 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anabella James	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a parent of a child who has special need , needs ABA services . My son has made a huge improvement while receiving ABA services . The impact has made a difference with my son's progress with communication, cognition and socialization.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:46:21 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carrie Miranda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider and nonprofit business founder on Kauai, I have experienced great difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified providers. This has had a direct negative impact on the amount of children I am able to serve. Rates for ABA service providers have not changed since 2015, despite significant increases in cost of living. In order to hire and retain qualified staff and pay livable wages, rate increases are needed so that we can move children off waitlists and provide for the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:46:23 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Bardsley-Marcial	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Quest rate increases for Applied Behavior Analysis to help support our provider agencies who staff professionals who provide medically necessary services to individuals diagnosed with Autism.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:48:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angelica Castro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider and as a sibling of an individual diagnosed with autism I believe that this bill will be beneficial in many ways. For providers, this bill will help to reduce drop out rates within the profession. The work that providers do is fundamental, however, with the increased cost of living it becomes difficult for them to keep up and search for other jobs elsewhere. Without our providers family's would struggle. As a sibling of someone who receives services I am grateful for the work that all the provider's have done in support of my brother. Our family would not be able to function as well as we do now without the support of these individuals. Their skills and knowledge have critically helped my family better understand my brother and his needs. They have taught us ways to support my brother in the home setting as well as in his school and community environment.

A second reason I am in support of this bill is because with increased rates for ABA more children can come off the waitlist to access the service they need. This would mean that more children and their families can get access to the help that my family and I have been so fortunate to receive. Better access to services means that there is more opportunity for early intervention and getting individuals the care that they need. It will help reduce anxiety and stress for both patients and their families. If these individuals have good access to healthcare, they will be more likely to receive the care they need to live a long, healthy life.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:49:26 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am mother of a young man with autism, he is 21 years old. He was non-verbal until he was 10 years old as his behavior was a form of communication. I went back to school when he was 7 years old to be a speech therapist because the system FAILED US. I felt I had no choice but to learn how to teach him because no one else would.

We fell into the income bracket where we made too much money for medicaid to cover expenses and not enough to outright be able to pay for the therapy he needed. I learned how to teach him to talk. Years later, as a speech therapist, I worked for a company where clients (children) were get passed around from therapist to therapist because no one had the skills to interpret their behavior as communication. I would volunteer to work with these children. I quickly discovered that I needed more tools.... I went back to school and got a masters in Applied Behavior Analysis, and later became a BCBA.

ABA was a game changer for my family and subsequently many other families I would work with over the course of the following years. ABA changed my life. I learned more of how to interpret behavior as communication and then I learned how to teach the children how to communicate their wants and needs in our world. ABA helped my child improve in ways no other form of therapy could.... He is now very verbal- we work on things like what is public information versus private information.

In comparing rates of ABA providers to other modalities serving the autism community, BCBA's make significant less than speech therapist, occupational therapist and physical therapist on an hourly basis. In ABA, we also treat clients for significantly more hours during the week, for example ST/OT/PT might see a child for 1 hour per week, whereas they may have 20-40 hours prescribed for ABA therapy.

This field is essential in increasing the quality of life for individual with autism as well as their families, please increase the rates for ABA providers.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:51:55 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Ho'ohuli	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of HB2712 HD 1, which addresses increasing the rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services under the QUEST program. As a provider, I've experienced firsthand the struggle to hire and retain qualified staff. The current rates have remained stagnant since 2015, failing to keep pace with the rising costs of living. This stagnation means children with autism are left waiting for essential services. By raising rates, we can ensure timely access to care and better support our providers in delivering quality services.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Mahalo,

Deborah Ho'ohuli

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:51:56 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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 for services 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:51:59 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 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-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:54:23 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aulani Latorre-Holt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe that this will greatly benefit the community in these trying times.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:55:12 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenifer Olin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill!

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:58:00 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Graham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Michelle Graham MS, 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 faucets of living (e.g. housing, food, gas, etc) and running a business, the current reimbursement rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services, supply and demand are misaligned. Reimbursement rates for ABA services have remained the same, 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 or when clients have to drive to a clinic. This has created exceptionally long wait lists for families to receive ABA services (e.g. 2+ years). Unfortunately, reimbursement rates are the main problem, 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. Please consider my testimony in support of HB2712, on behalf of myself, my colleagues and most importantly the families that we serve.

Kind Regards,

Michelle Graham MS, BCBA, LBA

LATE

**The Senate, Ka ‘Aha Kenekoa
The Thirty-Second Legislature
Regular Session Of 2024**

**Senator, Donovan M. Dela Cruz Chair
Senator, Sharon Y. Moriwaki Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means**

Lauren Rapoport
Resident of Kailua, Hawaii

Written Testimony for the Hearing on April 4, 2024, 10:15am
Conference Room 211
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Testimony in Support of HB 2712 HD1 [Relating To Autism]

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Lauren Rapoport and I strongly support the passage of HB 2712 HD1. I am a Masters in Social Work student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a resident of Kailua. Through my masters, I have interned at an interdisciplinary program focused on disability, in which I have been able to gain the insights of professionals in many fields; My conversations with many of Oahu’s developmental pediatricians, general pediatricians, BCBA’s, PhD’s, psychologists, social workers, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, public health students, special education teachers, and self advocates have led me to understand the importance of this bill. From these conversations, it is clear to me that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) on Med-QUEST plans are often forced to wait years for access to ABA services. Many agencies are unable to provide services for Med-QUEST patients; The reimbursement rates are so low that businesses would not be able to afford to stay afloat and employees would not be able to afford to pay their living costs if they accepted many Med-QUEST patients. Agencies that do accept Med-QUEST patients often only accept a small, specified number of Med-QUEST patients. As a result, children on Med-QUEST plans are forced to wait much longer for ABA services than children with private health insurance, widening the health equity gap that already exists among low socioeconomic status families in Hawaii.

Additionally, the low rate of Med-QUEST reimbursement for ABA services in Hawaii has contributed to the lack of ABA providers in Hawaii; RBT's outside of the DOE are not paid a liveable wage and as a result leave ABA work to pursue other professions and/or move to other states for higher wages. Raising the Med-QUEST reimbursement rate for ABA services may improve the job retention of ABA professionals, and may encourage local residents to pursue training and work in the ABA field. In addition, passage of this bill will likely shorten waiting times for and improve access to ABA services for low socioeconomic status families who have a child, adolescent, or young adult with autism spectrum disorder. While 2015 Luke's Law was designed to create equitable access to services for minors with ASD, children and adults with ASD continue to face barriers to care in Hawaii; I believe HB 2712 HD1 would begin to diminish some of these barriers. I urge you to support HB 2712 HD1. Thank you for your time and consideration of my written testimony, and I look forward to testifying in person.

Respectfully,

Lauren Rapoport

LATE

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 4:22:30 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/4/2024 10:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Krista Bumatay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a sibling of a person with Autism who received ABA, and I have seen the positive impact it has had on his life. At 26 years old, he still uses techniques and lesson he learned through ABA from when he was younger, so I support this bill so that more children have access to such an incredible resource.