



February 2, 2012

RE: Testimony for SB 1568

Dear Health Care Committee Representatives,

I am writing to provide written testimony in support of SB 1568. I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Licensed Professional Counselor who provides ABA services to children and adults in Portland and surrounding areas. I was on the Executive Board of the Indiana Association for Behavior Analysis and past President of the Oregon Association for Behavior Analysis. I have witnessed not only the extreme financial strain that funding these programs has on families but the incredible progress made by the individuals receiving the treatment. Families across the state have utilized any means possible to find resources to provide this evidence based treatment including refinancing their homes multiple times, accessing retirement funds, selling their homes and other personal property.

I have had the opportunity to practice in other states including Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Texas all of which have Autism coverage for their families. Upon relocating to Oregon, I was surprised that a state known to be progressive in so many ways failed to recognize the families that needed support the most. I have been in Oregon for almost 3 years and during that time I have seen three families relocate to New Jersey, North Carolina, and Wisconsin so that they could obtain the necessary coverage for their children with Autism. Within weeks of relocating they were in the process of obtaining ABA treatment with the support of insurance and/or educational funding.

Providers of ABA services must demonstrate competency in the implementation of behavior analysis for treatment to be effective and consistent with evidence based practices. This is best done by recognizing the credential of Board Certified Behavior Analyst. I am credentialed both as a Licensed Professional Counselor and Board Certified Behavior Analyst. The education and experience requirements set forth by states for licensure do not guarantee competency in behavior analysis. Many of the families that I work with receive some coverage of services if the provider has a state license regardless of the fact that exposure to behavior analysis by most licensed professionals is absent.

I would like to share a specific story about Sam, a client that I have worked with for just over a year. Sam is an 8 year-old little boy diagnosed with Autism. He is the middle of three children and Sam's younger brother is also diagnosed with Autism. Prior to the implementation of an intensive in-home ABA program Sam was in school. He was non verbal and unable to sit in a learning environment for longer than 5 seconds. Sam had no pre-academic academic skills and demonstrated extreme tantrum behaviors multiple times a day ranging from 10 to 45 minutes in duration. His program was established in October of 2009 immediately after his parents removed him from school due to lack of progress. Sam worked with his in-home therapist 40 hours a week first on merely establishing learner readiness skills (e.g., sitting and attending, waiting, accepting no, etc..) then on language and pre academic skills. Currently, Sam is able to sit and attend in a learning environment for up to 20 minutes. He has over 200 functional words

and is able to get his needs met throughout the day. Sam can request items, activities, and attention from people in his environment. He is able to read, write, and type. Sam's tantrums have decreased to less than 3 times a month lasting only 45 seconds or less. Sam's family has recently had to let their in-home therapist go because they can no longer afford the program they have been privately funding. Sam's parents have literally exhausted all of their financial resources. The guilt experienced by the family is heartbreaking. Here is a program that has taught their son skills in just over one year that the school wasn't able to teach in two. They were faced with a decision to jeopardize Sam's progress for the well being and survival of their family. This is a decision that no family should ever have to face.

Research clearly demonstrates the efficacy of ABA treatment across age groups for individuals with Autism. The case law established by the McHenry Case in September 2010 was groundbreaking since it solidified the fact that ABA not experimental. I would be happy to provide resources for locating research on the efficacy of ABA upon request. In addition, colleagues and I have numerous single case examples like Sam demonstrating the impact ABA programming has on the lives of those receiving the treatment and their families. We would be happy to provide additional examples upon request.

Oregon has the opportunity to pass SB 1568 and assist families in obtaining evidence based ABA treatment for their loved ones with Autism. Effective treatment should be available to all families. Progress for individuals with Autism does not have to cease once a child reaches a certain age or when savings accounts are drained. Oregon needs to take this opportunity to head in the same direction as the rest of the county when it comes to providing services to individuals with Autism.

Sincerely,

*Sarah L. Schaefer*

Sarah L. Schaefer, LPC, BCBA  
Behavior Analyst



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*Sarah L. Schaefer*

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