

Jenny Fischer, M.S., BCBA



March 31, 2013

Subject: Please Support SB365

Dear Members of the Senate Health Care Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am writing to ask for your support of SB365, the Autism Health Insurance Reform bill introduced by Senator Bates. If SB365 passes, Oregon will join 32 other states that require insurers to cover medically necessary, evidence-based autism treatments. In addition, it will establish licensing for behavior analysts, which will ensure that treatment is delivered by qualified providers.

As a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, I provide applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy to children, teens, and adults with autism in Central and Southern Oregon. Research supports ABA as the most effective intervention for individuals with autism. In fact, nearly half of children receiving early intensive ABA achieve normal cognitive and language functioning, and many enter school without need of supports. Access to this medically necessary therapy not only leads to brighter futures for children with autism, it results in sizeable long-term cost savings for state programs. Unfortunately, unless an Oregon family affected by autism has an out-of-state or self-funded insurance plan that covers ABA, they endure significant hardships to cover the costs of treatment.

Another important aspect of the bill is the identification of qualified ABA providers. Qualified providers are critical to the effectiveness of ABA therapy as well as the protection of consumers. SB365 will create a license for behavior analysts based on certification by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, a nationally accredited organization with rigorous standards of training, experience, and competence. Because the field of ABA is distinct from other behavioral health treatments, the vast majority of qualified providers in Oregon do not qualify for other Oregon licenses, and the vast majority of other licensed providers do not have the training and experience needed to provide ABA. As a result, families affected by autism face an additional hurdle in accessing coverage for treatment, and may be forced to obtain services from unqualified providers out of necessity. Licensure for behavior analysts will resolve these issues, and provide a means for this vulnerable population to access quality services.

I urge you to support SB365. 1 in 88 can't wait.

Kind regards,

Jenny Fischer, M.S., BCBA