



April 7, 2015

Submitted Via Email

Senate Laurie Monnes Anderson
900 Court Street NE, S-413
Salem, OR 97301

Re: **SB 696**

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson:

The Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) respectfully submits this testimony to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Senator Bates on behalf of Oregon's autism community and to provide support for those issues likely to be addressed by SB 696.

CARD is one of the world's largest organizations treating autism spectrum disorder (ASD) using the principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and the nation's third largest non-governmental organization contributing to autism research. CARD provides services to nearly 2,000 individuals diagnosed with ASD, employing a workforce of over 1,000 dedicated professionals in 36 locations across 14 states, including one location in Lake Oswego, Oregon, and two additional proposed locations opening later this year in Salem and Eugene.

As evidence-based autism treatment becomes more accessible in Oregon, it is critical that Oregon have a framework in place to ensure consumer safety and top-quality autism treatment, and SB 696 has the potential to provide exactly that. With broad consensus from a cross-disciplinary group of ABA providers, we are hopeful that SB 696 will clarify BARB's jurisdiction and the composition of its board and shift oversight of the Behavior Analysis Interventionists (BAI) to the Oregon Health Licensing Office.

CARD commends the efforts of Senator Bates to ensure that other licensed professionals have the opportunity to continue to practice ABA in Oregon, an inclusive approach that has been successfully undertaken by other states and which has proven integral to meeting consumer demand without diluting the quality of autism treatment. Additionally, CARD supports the elimination of dual registration requirements for qualified licensed professionals, which would only serve to hinder consumer access to evidence-based autism treatment.

As one of the world's largest employers of autism treatment professionals and paraprofessionals, CARD supports amended education requirements for BAIs in Oregon that eliminate college coursework requirements. To be sure, CARD employs hundreds of interventionists who have Bachelor's degrees and quite a few with Master's degrees; however, CARD also employs hundreds of interventionists who only have a high school diploma or the equivalent. Because ABA-based treatment is so data driven, the integrity of ABA-based autism treatment can be ensured through rigorous training and supervision and does not require college-level courses. Regardless of an individual's educational background, CARD requires 40 hours of training, a minimum of 15 hours of practicum/fieldwork with a senior therapist or Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), and a passing score on our therapist exam. These requirements are consistent with or greater than best practices, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board's guidelines, and state autism mandates that delineate the qualifications of the interventionist.

Additionally, CARD has joined many other healthcare providers in recruiting returning veterans to the field of autism treatment. Many "recently separated" veterans do not have any college education but make ideal interventionists because of their experience following explicit instructions. Moreover, there are multiple federal funding streams

available for community colleges that offer short-term training that results in employment in a healthcare field and additional funding streams to provide training to returning veterans.

Going forward, the importance of the legislative role and that of ORABA and BARB in attracting new ABA providers to Oregon cannot be understated. Given the prevalence rate of ASD (estimated by the Centers for Disease Control at 1:68) and the growing number of states ensuring access to autism treatment through autism mandates, Oregon's current ABA providers may be insufficient in number to meet demand. Proactive legislative efforts, such as those we anticipate in SB 696 protect consumers and their access to top-quality treatment, and the work of BARB and professional organizations to ensure continued growth in the field will help Oregon attract ABA providers to the state, just as it has attracted CARD.

It is our hope that SB 696 will simultaneously safeguard access to medically necessary autism treatment while creating job growth in Oregon's health care field, and it is a privilege to be part of Oregon's truly extraordinary autism community. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your ongoing commitment to Oregonians affected by autism. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at J.Kornack@centerforautism.com or at (818) 345-2345, extension 1070.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Kornack

Senior Public Policy Analyst

cc: Senator Jeff Kruse
Senator Tim Knopp
Senator Chip Shields
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Senator Alan Bates