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**Senate Committee on Health Care, Human Services & Rural Health Policy
Testimony of Tobi Rates on SB696**

Dear Chair Monnes-Anderson and members of the Committee:

My name is Tobi Rates, and I reside at 8306 NE Thompson St, Portland, OR 97220. I am here in my capacity as the Executive Director of the Autism Society of Oregon and the mother of two children on the autism spectrum who receive autism therapies, including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

The Autism Society of Oregon is the largest autism group in Oregon and the only one that operates state-wide. We represent everyone affected by autism, including individuals on the autism spectrum and their families, across the autism spectrum and throughout the life span. Our mission is to empower these individuals to improve the quality of their lives through resources, education, advocacy and support. Over 9,000 children are identified as having an autism spectrum disorder in Oregon. Their families access ASO as a resource throughout Oregon.

On behalf of ASO, I'd like to express our appreciation for Dr. Bates' longstanding support of the autism community and our support for his work-in-progress on SB 696. We look forward to a final version that includes the key points agreed upon by the providers in their joint statement to Dr. Bates. The critical elements of that joint statement for the final version of SB 696 include:

- Licensing and regulation of BCBA's (Board Certified Behavior Analysts) and BCaBA's (Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts) by the BARB (Behavior Analysis Regulatory Board);
- Licensing and regulation of other licensed providers by their respective Boards, with reimbursement for ABA techniques under the auspices of their own professional certifications and licenses and within the scope of their training and competence;
- Replacing the speech language pathologist seat on the BARB with a Licensed BCaBA;
- Replacing the public member on the BARB with a consumer of ABA services; and

- Setting up a registry for line therapists (also called “Interventionists”) housed within the OHA’s Health Licensing Office for interventionists who meet specific criteria that will protect the safety of the vulnerable population they serve and provide for direct training and supervision by licensed ABA providers.

As a parent, my children have received autism services in several different therapeutic areas, including from BCBAs, Occupational Therapists and Speech-Language Pathologists. All of these therapists have used ABA techniques to help my sons achieve important and measurable goals in their areas of expertise. Line therapists, under the supervision and direction of BCBAs and other professionals, have been an effective and economical way of providing the intensive services that my younger son in particular needed. Our experience with the many line therapists we’ve worked with through the years has been very good, and we remain in contact with several of them even after they’ve moved on in their careers.

ASO strongly supports an extension to the grandfathering period to ensure the continued ability of experienced, highly qualified providers of ABA services who were in practice as of the effective date of SB 365 to continue to be able to offer ABA services to families through 2018. The BCBA is a relatively new certification and many, if not most, of these providers began providing ABA services prior to the implementation of the BCBA. This extension gives them time to provide documentation to meet yet-to-be-determined licensing requirements, while allowing families to continue to access these desperately needed services. There are far more families seeking ABA services than there are providers in Oregon. The unnecessary loss of services from highly trained and experienced ABA providers would be highly detrimental to autistic people who benefit from these services, and will cause the cost for these services from the remaining providers to increase to the detriment of the private insurers and the OHA.

We are pleased to see all of the parties working together in a respectful and focused dialogue to make sure that the changes serve the autism community as a whole and putting the needs of autistic person first. We are looking forward to continuing the conversation as we move forward to a final version of SB696.

Thank you.

Tobi Rates
Executive Director