

March 14, 2017

Via Email - hbl.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

The Honorable Paul Holvey, Chair & Honorable Members of the Committee
House Committee on Business and Labor
Re: House Bill 2858 – **SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Holvey and Members:

This letter is to express my family's strong support for HB2858. In early March of 2017 the DCBS fined Pioneer Educators Health Trust (hereafter Pioneer) and Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield (hereafter Regence), among other insurers for failing to provide mental health coverage for the treatment of autism and for denying neurodevelopmental benefits in violation of the Mental Health Parity Act.

These two companies were fined specifically for denying our son, Cole Cannoy's treatment for Autism. We have been engaged in what we consider a battle with Regence and Pioneer since our initial request for pre-authorization for Applied Behavior Analysis Therapy was denied without explanation and without information about how to appeal. That initial denial occurred in July of 2015 and DCBS got involved early in helping to compel Pioneer and Regence to reverse their decision. We have also had to battle these insurers for trying to limit Cole's occupational therapy through the fall of 2016 and early winter of 2017. In this instance again, we were heartened by DCBS' involvement and support. They worked with us and with these insurance companies to ensure that our son's legal rights were protected and for that we are grateful.

Though we appreciate all that the DCBS has done to support our family and son, we think that there are ways that this process could be improved. First, it was quite clear early in the summer of 2015 that our insurers had violated the law in denying Applied Behavior Analysis therapy for our son and yet it took until November for these issues to finally be resolved and for our son to begin his therapy. With Autism early intervention is critical and the effect of those months of lost therapy on his development simply cannot be quantified. Similarly, when his occupational therapy was initially denied in September of 2016, it took until March of 2017 for the issue to be resolved and for his therapy to resume. In both of these instances we were very appreciative of the wonderful advocacy work that the DCBS did but wish that there would have been a way to streamline the process in the event that an insurer is so clearly violating the law.

A second way that the process could be improved is to include families in discussions about restitution. In spite of the very large fines levied against Pioneer and Regence earlier this month, we have yet to hear anything about restitution in our case. If those conversations have been happening at DCBS we have not been privy to them and would have liked to have been involved and notified of decisions being made in that regard.

Again, we want to express our tremendous gratitude to DCBS for protecting consumers and specifically for intervening in our cases to great effect. We hope that streamlining the process through which DCBS intervenes will allow them to be even more effective in protecting consumers.

With gratitude,

Heather Smith-Cannoy David Cannoy

Heather Smith- Cannoy, David and Cole Cannoy