

Submitter: Jeni Canaday
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2023

Members of the committee,

I have grave concerns about this bill to expand the reach of the ABA Industrial Complex into the lives of even more vulnerable children.

ABA attempts to modify a child's behavior without understanding the underlying "why" behind the behavior. This leads to trauma, misunderstandings and Complex PTSD.

Unfortunately, I was unaware of this many years ago when I fought to have my Blind and Autistic son placed in an inpatient ABA program that was sold to me as one of the best programs in the world, but it didn't take long for me to realize that it was more like hell in a Petri dish,

And it didn't take long for my son to begin asking me if he was still a human. He is a nontraditional communicator, in his third person way of speaking, he managed to tell me, "He's a hostage Mama."

That is when I realized that he was experiencing ABA as terrorism. We were both later diagnosed with PTSD from the experience.

One of the more common techniques in ABA is called "planned ignoring". His Blindness did not stop them from using this technique, so when he would ask who was there with him in the room and they refused to answer it was very scary and traumatizing for him. So how does it make sense to use behaviorism to modify symptoms of a condition like epilepsy and Cerebral Palsy that is out of the child's control?

There was only one child there with Downs Syndrome. He received the most brutal interventions that ABA has to offer. I remember walking into a room to find this child blindfolded with his hands tied behind his back, while his face was being shoved into a corner by two poorly trained behavior technicians. I reported this but was told it was an acceptable protocol because they believed that kids with Downs require more "intensive interventions".

Another child was punished for having uncontrollable tics.

The ABA industry is growing at twice the rate of other multisite healthcare businesses. Currently the ABA industry is dominated by private equity groups. The financial investors fixation on profit has led to increased analyst caseloads, and reduced parental involvement, which has made this archaic intervention even more dangerous. These cookie cutter profit machines are turning most ABA clinics into the equivalent of fast-food intervention.

True ABA cannot be trauma informed or culturally responses. It is a science experiment that only focuses on what is observable. ABA is not therapy and behavior technicians with 30 hours of training are not therapists. Th method influences people to see disabled children in an inhumane light. It teaches children learn to live with discomfort that can turn life-threatening because they are trained to ignore their internal experience. It sets them up for victimization by compliance training them to comply, even when it doesn't feel right or safe.

There is a human rights atrocity happening right now in this country at an ABA Center where they are using painful electric shocks to control extremely vulnerable humans. The more they fight for their human rights, the more they get shocked. This is ABA.

As long as vulnerable humans are being electrocuted in the name of compliance training, we should all be fighting for abolishment.

Gay conversion therapy has the same roots as ABA and has been banned in Oregon. Now it is time for us to step up and give the same protections to the most vulnerable children in our state.

Often families have trouble discerning whether the ABA company is truly practicing abusive behavioral compliance training, or if they are just calling what they do ABA so that they can bill for their service. The autistic community uses the #YesAllABA to push back against those who claim they aren't doing "the harmful kind" because yes, all ABA is harmful.

Please vote no on expanding access to ABA.

I encourage you to read more from others who have lived experience with ABA here <https://stopabasupportautistics.home.blog/2019/08/11/the-great-big-aba-opposition>