



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
919 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, ROOM 113
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 20, 2008

The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair
House Committee on Health
Twenty-Fourth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Representative Green and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: HCR 62 – REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF REQUIRING HEALTH INSURERS TO PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

The position and views expressed in this testimony do not represent nor reflect the position and views of the Department of Health.

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities **supports HCR 62**. The purpose of the concurrent resolution is to request the Auditor to conduct an impact assessment report of the social and financial impacts of mandating health insurers to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

The Council appreciates the Legislature's interest and concern about autism spectrum disorders and looks forward to the results of the Auditor's report.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HCR 62.

Sincerely,

Waynette K.Y. Cabral
Executive Administrator

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**TESTIMONY TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH STATE LEGISLATURE, 2008
SESSION**

To: House Committee on Health
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

From: Gary L. Smith, President
Hawaii Disability Rights Center

Re: HCR 62

Hearing: Wednesday, February 20, 2008 9:00 AM
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

Members of the Committee on Health:
Members of the Committee on Human Services and Housing

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting HCR 62

I am Gary L. Smith, President of the Hawaii Disability Rights Center, formerly known as the Protection and Advocacy Agency of Hawaii (P&A). As you may know, we are the agency mandated by federal law and designated by Executive Order to protect and advocate for the human, civil and legal rights of Hawaii's estimated 180,000 people with disabilities.

We support this Concurrent Resolution. We believe that medical insurance policies should cover the treatments for autism spectrum disorder. Yet, there are many advocates in the community for the needs of autistic children who have relayed experiences concerning a lack of coverage. If that is true, then the legislature should in our view mandate such coverage. This is a serious condition which can be ameliorated with proper treatment.

We realize that under state law, a Report from the Legislative Auditor is required before the legislature can mandate such coverage. In that event, we hope the Committee will pass this Concurrent Resolution so we can have the study.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this Resolution.

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Kalma K. Wong
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February 19, 2008

Representative Josh Green, M.D.
Chair, House Committee on Health
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 327
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Representative John Mizuno
Vice-Chair, House Committee on Health
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 436
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: In support of HCR62, Requesting the Auditor to Assess the Social and Financial Effects of Requiring Health Insurers to Provide Coverage for Diagnosis and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders
House Committee on Health, February 20, 2008, 9 a.m., Room 329

Dear Chair Green, Vice-Chair Mizuno, and members of the House Health Committee:

I am writing to express my support of House Concurrent Resolution 62, which requests that the State Auditor assess the social and financial impact of requiring health insurers to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, as is outlined in House Bill 2727.

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that currently affects 1 in 150 children, according to the Center for Disease Control. Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others, and is often associated with repetitive behaviors, poor eye contact, and rigidity in routines. Children with autism often have co-occurring conditions, such as behavioral problems, speech disorders, depression, anxiety, muscle or joint problems, ear infections, vision and hearing problems, and allergies. The wide range of co-occurring problems leads to their need for services from trained medical professionals and for a full-range of therapies. The therapies include speech therapy, occupational therapy, and intensive behavioral therapy, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), among others. With proper medical intervention and intensive therapies children with autism can improve to such an extent that they can enter mainstream classrooms unassisted.



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Unfortunately, children with autism are often denied coverage for necessary therapies by private health insurance companies. One important therapy denied by insurers is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA has a decades-long record of efficacy and is recognized by The U.S. Surgeon General's 2001 Report on Mental Health as the treatment that is widely accepted as being effective for autism. Although ABA is the single intervention most often sought by parents of children with autism, insurers frequently deny it as a benefit. As a result, families often pay for these costly services out of pocket. But many families cannot afford these effective therapies and are forced to go without them at all, leaving children with autism even farther behind.

The failure of insurance companies to provide coverage for effective treatments for autism is not only an injustice to families affected by autism, it is also a gross disservice to Hawaii and to the citizens of this state. It has been estimated that the cost of caring for someone with autism is \$3 million over his or her lifetime, and the cost to the country per year is \$13 billion. However, with effective treatments, it has been estimated that the cost savings per child is \$2.4 to \$2.8 million per year to age 55. Mandated insurance coverage for autism will result in a huge cost savings for everyone in the long run.

Please pass House Concurrent Resolution 62 and take an important step toward making insurance coverage for autism a reality.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kalma K. Wong
Hawaii Chapter President &
Advocacy Chair for Hawaii,
Autism Speaks / Cure Autism Now



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mizuno1-Edgar

From: Ira I Wong [iraw@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Monday, February 18, 2008 1:31 PM
To: HLTtestimony
Subject: HCR62, House Health Committee, Wednesday, February 20, 2008, 9 a.m., Room 329

Chair Representative Josh Green and Vice-Chair Representative John Mizuno,

I would like to take this opportunity to ask for your support of House Concurrent Resolution 62 (HCR62). I have seen the enormous financial burden Autism has placed on families and friends in recent years and feel there is a desperate need to find workable solutions to assist these people in any way possible.

Thank you for you time and consideration.

Aloha,

Ira Wong
Band Director
University Laboratory School

"And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make." - The Beatles

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Teresa Chao Ocampo
215 N. King Street, Apt. 207
Honolulu, HI 96817

February 20, 2008

Representative Josh Green, Chair
Representative John Mizuno, Vice Chair
The House Committee on Health
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Meeting on Wednesday, February 20, 2008, Conference Room 329 at 9:00am

RE: HCR62 RESOLUTION REQUESTING AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF REQUIRING HEALTH INSURERS TO PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS.

Dear Representatives Green, Mizuno and House Committee on Health:

I support HCR62. An assessment of this nature will only convince all individuals who have no relationship to any child with Autism that early and intense treatment of children with Autism will reduce the social and financial impacts of our society if their medical needs are met early on in life.

According to the Autism Society of America, Autism is a complex neurological disorder that typically appears in the first three years of life. It affects the functioning of the brain and therefore impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Autism and its many variations are recognized in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR). Therefore, Autism is a treatable medical condition.

In February 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had issued a report that concluded that the prevalence of Autism had risen to 1 out of 150 children in the United States and almost 1 in every 94 boys. This means that there may be as many as 1.5 million Americans today living with Autism. If you review the statistics from the Department of Education, Hawaii's Autism rates have steadily increased in parallel with the national average. Financial challenges for parents are magnified due to limited insurance coverage for therapies in the treatment of Autism. Hawaii's insurance companies currently do not RECOGNIZE Autism as a medical disease or disorder thereby making this a very difficult burden to many Hawaii families.

Parents must often make difficult choices between their Autistic child and the needs of the rest of the family where they incur thousands and thousands of dollars of out of pocket expenses for therapies, drugs and various labs that are currently not covered by health insurance providers here in Hawaii. As a parent of an Autistic child, every day is a struggle.

Routine tasks that many people take for granted such as eating, brushing teeth, changing clothes, going to school and basic safety and hygiene needs all take a toll on parents and family of Autistic children day to day. We have to teach our children how to understand pragmatic speech, how to read body language and how to understand inferences in social settings. We have to teach our children how to express their emotions and what they mean. We have to teach our children not to panic when they get wet by a few drops of rain. We have to teach our children how to survive in a world that no longer tolerates individual differences. Our children need these services early in life to help them function in society independently as adults. These are some of

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the reasons why this Resolution is so important to the children of Hawaii, even more so to those who are yet to be diagnosed.

Insurance companies may argue that there will be a shift in the cost of autism related services to those private members who currently pay premiums. This is the usual argument from the insurance companies whenever they face this type of situation, however, the findings almost always show that there is little to no impact on the private members. Nevertheless, we will never know the answer unless the proposed assessment is conducted.

Please support HCR62 for our children and their future.

Sincerely,

Teresa Chao Ocampo
Parent of an Autistic child
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808-585-8641

(Resolution HCR62)

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