



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
April 4, 2008

The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
Twenty-Fourth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Baker and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: SCR 196 SD1 – REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO ASSESS THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF REQUIRING HEALTH INSURERS TO PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR THE 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 SCR 196 SD1**. The purpose of the concurrent resolution is to request the Auditor to: 1) 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; and 2) submit findings and recommendations to the Legislature prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2009.

The Council is aware of HB 2727 HD2 SD1 – Relating to Health Insurance that is moving through the legislative process. The bill establishes a temporary Autism Spectrum Disorders Benefits and Coverage task force to: 1) research problems faced by parents of children with autism and what can be done to ensure proper benefits and services are provided; 2) research other states' health insurance coverage plans and develop a plan of services that health insurers should be mandated to cover; and 3) submit a report to the Legislature prior to the 2009 session. We recommend including language in the Committee report that the Auditor and the task force shall coordinate its activities to avoid duplication of work and resources.

The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker
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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 SCR 196 SD1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Waynette K.Y. Cabral". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Waynette K.Y. Cabral
Executive Administrator



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

919 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 101 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V/TDD) • Fax (808) 586-8129

April 4, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senate Concurrent Resolution 196, SD1 – 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 Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) is a statewide board with seventeen (17) members appointed by the Governor, thirteen (13) of whom are persons with disabilities or family members. The Board's mission is to advocate and promote full integration, independence, equal access, and quality of life for persons with disabilities in society. This testimony represents a position voted upon by the Legislative Committee of the Board.

We support SCR 196, SD1 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. We are aware that it is a requirement for a study to be conducted related to the social and financial effects of requiring health insurers to offer coverage for diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders, per Section 21-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes. DCAB supports this study in order to obtain necessary information to amend the statute in an informed and appropriate manner to mandate coverage for diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

PATRICIA M. NIELSEN
Chairperson
Legislative Committee

FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director



HAWAII DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER

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TESTIMONY TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH STATE LEGISLATURE, 2008 SESSION

To: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

Re: SCR 196, SD1

Hearing: Friday, April 4, 2008 10:05 AM
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting SCR 196, SD1.

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.



Kalma K. Wong
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Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744
(808) 393-5218
flute866@gmail.com

April 3, 2008

Senator Rosalyn Baker
Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee

Senator Shan Tsutsui
Vice-Chair, Ways and Means Committee

Re: In support of SCR196, Requesting the Auditor to Assess the Social and Financial Impacts of Requiring Health Insurers to Provide Coverage for Diagnosis and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders, Senate Committee on Ways and Means, April 4, 2008, 10:05 p.m., room 211

Dear Chair Baker, Vice-Chair Tsutsui, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing to express my support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 196, 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 Senate Bill 2532.

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.

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 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 Senate Concurrent Resolution 196 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
(Formerly Cure Autism Now)

testimony

From: Naomi Grossman [naomi_grossman@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 03, 2008 2:18 PM
To: testimony
Subject: Testimony in Support of SCR 196, SD1:Relating to Insurance - Senate WAM 040408 1005am Conf Rm #211

April 4, 2008; 10:05 a.m.
Hawaii State Legislature
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Conference Room #211

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SCR 196, SD1

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, my name is Naomi Grossman, I am the president of the Autism Society of Hawai'i and the parent of a student living with the effects of autism spectrum disorders.

The Autism Society of Hawai'i offers its strong support for HCR 196, SD1: Senate concurrent resolution requesting the auditor to assess the social and financial impacts of requiring health insurers to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

The Autism Society of Hawai'i is an affiliate chapter of the Autism Society of America. Its members are composed of families who deal with living with the effects of autism spectrum disorders and the professionals and paraprofessionals who serve them. The Autism Society of Hawai'i (ASH) will provide leadership in the field of autism spectrum disorders dedicated to supporting families who advocate on behalf of their children and are committed to reducing the consequences of autism through education, research, and advocacy.

First of all, thank you for considering this important need for children and students ages 0 - 21. As you know, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is a neurobiological disorder that presents itself as a triad of deficits affecting 1 in 150 children. The prevalence rate occurs four times greater in males than in females. ASD 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. Treatment programs need to be provided by licensed and unlicensed credentialed practitioners who have expertise in the child and student's specialized area of need. If untreated, the condition can escalate to a point where behaviors are exacerbated unless early intervention and intensive services are a part of the individualized design to meet the unique programmatic needs of the young child or student. Research shows that ASD is treatable. Children can grow and become caring, competent and contributing members of their community and the community-at-large.

It wasn't long ago when the state Legislature conducted a state-funded feasibility study on autism around 1990 when the Hawaii Resource and Technical Assistance Project on Autism was funded under the University Affiliated Program (now called Center on Disability Studies), University of Hawai'i at Mano'a. At that time there were no systematized services in place for autism except institutionalization. Autism was considered a low-incident disorder.

Today, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) based on B.F. Skinner's behavior modification approach is considered an evidence-based approach of choice and is an appropriately covered under TriCare insurance in Hawaii.

By 1996, autism was revealed to be in the top third of disabilities alongside with Down's Syndrome. Today, ASD continues to grow at an alarming rate surpassing HIV/AIDS as the fastest growing disability. ASD represents a critical need to be addressed in the public and private sectors of the community.

Thank you for considering SCR 196, SD1 in conjunction with the auditor conducting a sunrise study and reporting back before health insurance coverage can be mandated for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. S.B. No. 2532, S.D. 1 has been introduced in the Legislature and includes the information required for the Auditor to conduct the study.

The Autism Society of Hawai'i appreciates the opportunity to submit a letter of strong support for SCR 196, SD1 as we look forward to making insurance coverage for autism a reality.

Sincerely,

Naomi Grossman
Autism Society of Hawai'i, president

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