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COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL OF HAWAII  
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March 29, 2011

Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair  
Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SCR 51

Dear Chair Baker and Members of the Committee,

The 17 Community Children's Councils (CCC's) of Hawaii support the intent of SCR 51. We encourage the auditor to examine which programs provide mandatory screenings and to ascertain more information regarding those that have been "grandfathered" in.

The CCCs are community based bodies comprised of parents, professionals in both public and private agencies, and other interested persons. CCCs are in rural and urban communities organized around the Complexes in the Department of Education. Membership is voluntary and advisory in nature. CCCs are concerned with specialized services provided to Hawaii's students.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this issue. Should you have any questions regarding our position, you are welcome to contact me by phone or email.

Tom Smith, Co-Chair

Jessica Wong-Sumida, Co-Chair

(Original signatures are on file with the CCCO).

Good Morning Senators. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Janet Edghill, and I am the mother of a 3 year old son with autism. Autism is a medical condition, and is diagnosed not by a school principal, but by a medical doctor. You have probably heard about the huge increase in the incidence in autism—according to the Centers for Disease Control, the average total Autism Spectrum prevalence in 2006 (to children born in 1998) was 1 in 110 children; 1 in 71 boys are affected...these numbers continue to grow, and since this data is already 5 years old, we can expect the newer statistics to be even more grim. I literally don't go anywhere that I don't meet someone who has a family member afflicted with autism.

And although autism isn't curable, it is treatable, and with proper treatment these children can go on to lead productive lives—to become tax payers. But treatment is expensive, and most families simply cannot afford services to help their child. Imagine how helpless you would feel, knowing there is an effective treatment, but you can't access it because of cost? I'll bet you'd be frustrated, angry, devastated to see your child suffer needlessly—especially if you've paid all your insurance premiums, done the right thing, and yet therapy for autism—A MEDICAL CONDITION—is excluded.

Although autism is typically thought of as a childhood disorder, these children do grow up and the effects on society continue throughout a lifetime. The Harvard School of Public Health has estimated the costs of caring for an autistic person to be \$3.2 million over a person's lifetime. These costs are borne by families, but also by society—public schools, public services the medical system, the taxpayers here in Hawaii. Only the insurance industry escapes this burden.

You might think, “but insurance rates will rise dramatically”, but that has not been the case in the states that have passed legislation to require insurance companies to cover autism therapies. Data shows the impact on premiums has been 75 – 83 cents per month per insured. And in states that have passed this legislation, 25 to date, providers have been able to negotiate fair rates, no businesses have gone bankrupt and no insurers have fled the state as a result of this benefit.

I urge you to vote “Yes” to request the auditor assess the SOCIAL and FINANCIAL effects of requiring health insurers to provide this coverage. I do this not just as a parent, but as a Hawaii taxpayer. A fair review of this issue will show it is the decent, fair and fiscally expedient thing to do for the good of the state.