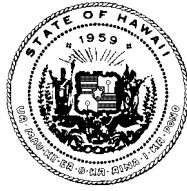


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

February 24, 2024

To: The Honorable Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2712 HD1 – RELATING TO AUTISM.**

Hearing: February 26, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill as long as it does not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Governor's budget.

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds to increase the funding for applied behavioral analysis (ABA) services for persons with autism. Requires the Department of Human Services to obtain maximum federal matching funds and pursue all other funding sources. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee of Human Services amended this measure by changing its effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion.

DHS appreciates the intent of this bill to increase the rates for ABA services. ABA services are a clinically effective treatment modality for many children diagnosed with autism. The Med-QUEST Division commissioned a [rate study](#) for ABA services, which was submitted to the Legislature in December 2023. That rate study modeled low, medium, and high scenarios for consideration. The low scenario would require \$6.5M (\$2.69M state funds/\$3.81M federal),

February 24, 2024

Page 2

the medium scenario would require \$7.8M (\$3.23M state funds/\$4.57M federal), and the high scenario would require \$9.4M (\$3.9M state funds/\$5.5M federal).

DHS prefers that any appropriation be included in the executive budget bill as opposed to this bill so the appropriation can be recurring and the increase ongoing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2024 8:39:17 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

ABA has been a true " godsend" in terms of providing therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder. However, Hawaii has a shortage of providers and the fact that reimbursement rates have not changed in many years is one of the contributing factors. The provider shortage has prevented many children from accessing the services and that is extremely unfortunate to put it mildly. We believe that funding rate increases will definitely help build provider capacity, and so we are in support.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:49:19 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
FRED K YUEN	BTSH	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. As a provider agency that employs providers providing ABA services, we support this Bill to raise reimbursement rates. In conjunction with the already high cost of living and the recent increased inflation, the lack of increased reimbursement rates for ABA has put our field at a disadvantage. Hiring and retaining has been the most difficult task. The question is, invest poorly (increase training costs) in training someone not at a level of competency or allow clients to go unserved. A scenario that we hate to be in. Along with needing better rates to compete with other industries for fair market employees, it is our obligation as a state to keep workers here. The people of Hawai'i move out of state to do the same job just so they can balance their income with their cost of living. This causes our work force to be highly dependent on transplants. Although needed and appreciated, they tend to leave as well. Let's do what's right and increase the reimbursement rates, creating a culture that can sustain careers. Mahalo.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 2:47:20 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ben Woody	BTSH Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Be. Woody and I work as an RBT for BTSH Hawaii. I'm writing to support this bill as I feel an increase in salaries for Rbt's would greatly improve the quality of the services provided here in Hawaii.

What we do is extremely important, bit a lot of us have to work 2 or three jobs to survive here. This, taking away from the energy that we have with our clients. An increase of just \$3 dollars an hour would greatly help with this situation.

I support this bill with all my heart, and I truly hope that it passes.

Mahalo nui loa for your time,

Ben Woody



Aloha e Committee Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Maui Learning Academy, a private school specializing in medical necessity and academic-based behavior-analytic services, we would like to testify in **strong support of House Bill 2712**, relating to the appropriation of funds to increase funding for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services for individuals with autism.

I am writing to express my strong support for proposed legislation aimed at adjusting rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services. Since the inception of coverage in 2015, the rates for these essential services have remained stagnant, failing to keep pace with the rising costs of living. As a result, children with autism in our state are not receiving the level of care they urgently require.

Please prioritize this legislation and take decisive action to ensure that rates for ABA services are adjusted to reflect the current economic realities. By doing so, we can uphold our commitment to supporting children with autism and their families, providing them with the resources and support they need to thrive. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Mahalo,

Suzanne Ely
Head of School



Appropriates funds to increase the funding for applied behavioral analysis services for persons with autism.

Template from HABA President:

Dear Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Tam, and members of the Committee:

I would like to offer testimony in **strong support** of House Bill 471 relating to Behavior Analysts.

I am a(parent of a child with a disability, educator, behavior analyst, registered behavior technician, special education teacher, person with a disability, psychologist, member of the community). This licensure law is important to me because [PLEASE INCLUDE A BRIEF PARAGRAPH OF WHY THIS LICENSURE LAW IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, MAKE IT INDIVIDUAL TO YOUR EXPERIENCES]

[OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION THAT YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO INCLUDE IN YOUR TESTIMONY:]

- The continued licensure of behavioral analysts provides much needed access to services for keiki and other Hawaii residents.
- Since the enactment of the licensure law and autism insurance coverage law in 2015, over 480 behavior analysts and 1400 registered behavior technicians have been licensed or credentialed in the State. Thousands of individuals have received access to applied behavior analysis services.
- Regulation of behavior analysts is needed to ensure demand for services continues to be met, and to maintain the quality of services.
- Continued regulation ensures that behavior analysts are licensed professionals providing services that are eligible for public and private insurance reimbursement.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of this measure.

[Testifier signature]

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:06:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Libby	Mau Loa Learning	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 12:10:30 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy D. Wiech	ABC Group Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

26 Feb 2024

IN SUPPORT OF HB2712

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

I am writing IN SUPPORT OF HB2712. ABA rates MUST be increased as outlined by the Milliman Rate Study <https://medquest.hawaii.gov/content/dam/medquest/docs/fee-schedule/HI%20ABA%20Rate%20Study%20-%2020231221.pdf>.

My name is Dr. Amy Smith Wiech, I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the Doctoral Level and I have been an ABA practitioner for over 30 years. I founded ABC Group in 2006, and we have been providing life-changing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) treatment to the children and families of Oahu for nearly the last 20 years. Approximately 50% of our clientele are MedQuest/Medicaid patients, with even more on our over 1 year long waitlist!

High quality, medically-necessary ABA treatment ameliorates the symptoms of autism by teaching toleration skills for difficult routines or tasks, teaching communication skills to replace maladaptive behavior, teaching pre-employment skills and life (such as social skills, conversational skills, following directions and written task completion skills) so that children/adolescents can be employable by the time they reach age 18 or 21, and as independent as possible. Amelioration of these symptoms can also push a kid back into general education classrooms to participate with their typically developing peers. They can have sleepovers and best friends, join Boy Scouts, and get jobs to support themselves! It is a life-changing treatment!

20 years ago, in 2004, I started working with TRICARE as a sole BCBA provider here on Oahu to provide ABA treatment to military dependents. The rates 20 years ago for BCBA were \$37.50 (15 minutes), or \$125 an hour. The rates for “tutor” were \$12.50 (15 minutes) or \$50/hour (the term “tutor” would become what we know as an RBT when the BACB adopted this level of practitioner and created the first credential for RBTs in 2015).

In 2015, when MedQuest announced the rates for ABA treatment, MedQuest and commercial payers adopted these same publicly available published rates that were borrowed from the 2002-2004 TRICARE rates.

These ABA rates in Hawaii that were set on the 2002-2004 TRICARE rates, have remained nearly the same for the last 20 years, despite the cost of living in Hawaii skyrocketing over 68% in that same time. Additionally, Medical care inflation per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has increased 2% to 4% per year since 2004 for a cumulative increase of 88% over the last 20 years.

These current reimbursement rates do not leave us much left with to pay our overhead expenses at our clinic, provide staff pay increases to keep up with inflation, or even realize much of a profit. Our electric bill was just provided to us by our landlord and it is over \$7000 for last month alone!

When BCBA's or RBTs come to us asking for a raise, it is heartbreaking to hear that they cannot afford gas, or food for their families, so they need to go look for other work, and are leaving the field of ABA as they say this is a hard job without adequate pay. Hence the reason for high turnover in ABA, another variable adding to the costs that we endure is because our reimbursement rates are not enough to allow us to compensate them to live in Hawaii. The cost to an organization for losing an RBT is \$5000-7000 per RBT who leaves. This mirrors the attrition of BCBA's who cost an organization \$10,000-\$15,000 (or about 10-15% of their salary). This attrition leads to increased costs to MedQuest, because with the attrition of RBTs or BCBA's, the duration for ABA treatment will be extended due to the inconsistency with RBTs/BCBA's and lack of providers to schedule in to replace those who have departed.

Unique to the medical field, ABA providers are also burdened with the cost of training the candidates to become RBTs, training them on the job, whether an easy kid or a really challenging kid. There is no Remington College or Heald College for RBTs. It takes us about 8 weeks to get a candidate from interview to working 1:1 with a MedQuest kid. Again, contributing to a network adequacy problem because access to care is delayed.

Burnout is real folks. Staff are leaving the industry of ABA because this is very DIFFICULT work. Our reimbursement rates have not increased substantially in the last 20 years and the lack of meaningful increases in reimbursement rates leaves the industry unable to adequately compensate these dedicated, hardworking individuals!

How many of you could go without a pay raise for 20 years? At ABC Group, we are hitting a cost ceiling. Our net margins are abysmal. We are at a critical juncture.

Over the last 20 years we have been providing 1st Class Seats (or even seats in our Private Jet!) so to speak, for the Economy Fares that MedQuest reimburses us, and unfortunately we will be forced to change our high quality care model if you do not pass these rate increases that Milliman Rate Study outlined!

This will force us to:

1. Discontinue paying our staff for quality-related non-billable time that allows us to make treatment more efficient, and more effective, therefore allowing for titration faster. It will just take us longer to get to the titration finish line.

This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

2. Discontinue intake of the most challenging patients that no other providers will intake, since intaking a severe kid requires the allocation of staff resources (much of those that are non-billable). It requires the allocation of RBTs who can “handle” those crisis behaviors when they arise, and is also a variable for staff burnout. When they are in crisis it costs us more money to staff that patient especially when they present with severe physical and severe behavioral challenges. These are your patients who unfortunately are on a future path to residential treatment which will cost the State of Hawaii upwards of \$350k per year per individual. This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

3. Discontinue the intake of those challenging patients who cannot tolerate routine medical visits or exams and treatment, dental treatment, or have self-imposed dietary limitations that impact their daily health. The costs of mitigating these health challenges may be priceless to families.

This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

4. Discontinuing the items above will create a network adequacy issue for MedQuest as no other providers will take these patients now, and we already know there is a delay with waitlists where EPSDT requires services be provided without delay. Sadly this would force ABA providers like us to just only take the easy patients.

This will cost MedQuest and the State more money in the long run.

The cost of doing business and living in Hawaii is the highest in all of the United States. Taxes, insurance, workers comp, mandated health insurance coverage, and costs of commercial real estate rents skyrocketing, are forcing us to reexamine our business model unless we are able to persuade you to vote in support of this bill HB 2712.

This is make it or break it for us as an ABA provider, the children we serve and the families across our state. We cannot sustain operations with these current rates and not passing this bill could force us out of business!

Please pass this bill for the children and families living with autism across the State of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

Amy Wiech, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA

Executive Director and Founder

Licensed Behavior Analyst Since 2004

Autism Behavior Consulting Group, Inc

ABC Group Hawaii

www.abcgrouphawaii.com



House of Representatives
Committee on Finance
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Monday, February 26, 2024
10:00 am
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: In Support of HB2712 *Submitted online via the Hawaii State Legislature website*

Esteemed Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

I write you today on behalf of The Council of Autism Service Providers (CASP) in support of HB 2712. CASP is a non-profit trade association of autism service provider organizations that have a demonstrated commitment to promoting and delivering evidence-based practices for individuals with autism. CASP represents the autism provider community to the nation at large, including government, payers, and the general public. CASP provides information, education, and promotes the generally accepted standards of care for applied behavior analysis, ABA.

Of particular interest to our members is the coverage of evidence-based care in both private health insurance plans as well as through Medicaid. Timely access to medically necessary treatment, including applied behavior analysis, is critical for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).¹

The State of Hawaii took an important step in 2015, when it passed legislation requiring coverage of medically necessary care for ASD. Since then, individuals diagnosed with ASD have had access to meaningful interventions, reducing their need for special education services, improving their quality of life, and opening doors for further education and employment.

This coverage includes children under the age of 21 who are enrolled in MedQUEST, assuring access to medically necessary care pursuant to Medicaid's Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) mandate and CMS' Informational Bulletin on Clarification of

¹ The American Academy of Pediatrics has long recognized that immediate intervention is critical in the treatment of autism. Pediatrics, Vol. 120, No.5, Management of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (2007), p. 1163.
46_dmhc_regs.pdf

Medicaid Coverage of Services to Children with Autism.² EPSDT requires that these services be provided **without delay**. The previously referenced CMS bulletin states:

*EPSDT also requires medically necessary diagnostic and treatment services. When a screening examination indicates the need for further evaluation of a child's health, the child should be appropriately referred for diagnosis and treatment **without delay**. Ultimately, the goal of EPSDT is to assure that children get the health care they need, when they need it – the right care to the right child at the right time in the right setting.*

The role of states is to make sure all covered services are available as well as to assure that families of enrolled children, including children with ASD, are aware of and have access to a broad range of services to meet the individual child's needs.

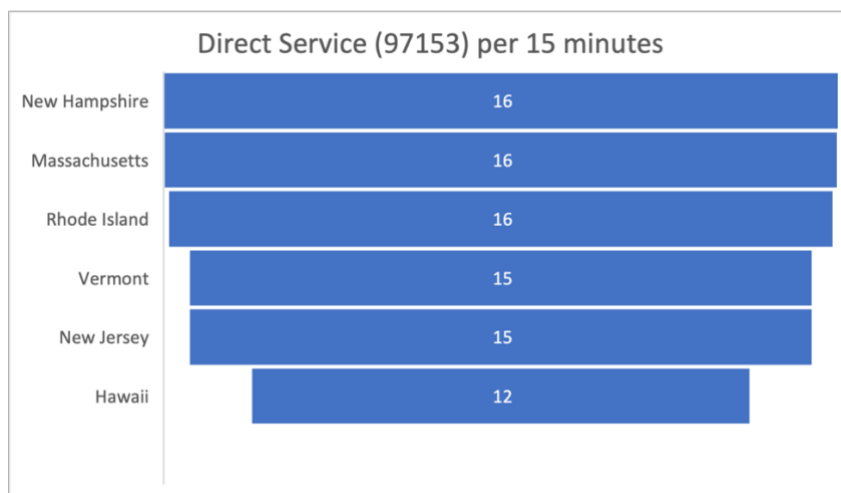
Ensuring an adequate network is established by offering appropriate rates is critical. The existing MedQUEST rates have not been adjusted since 2015, even though the cost of providing these services has skyrocketed. This has caused our member organizations to maintain wait lists for children who are in dire need of services and is in direct contradiction to the requirements of EPSDT.

Additionally, as indicated below, other states with similar costs of living have rates that are more in line with economic forces and many of these states also allow for concurrent billing of CPT codes 97153 and 97155, consistent with guidance from the American Medical Association CPT codebook³ and the ABA Coding Coalition.⁴

² Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services. Informational Bulletin, Clarification of Medicaid Coverage of Services to Children with Autism, July 7, 2014 (hereinafter "CMS Informational Bulletin"), available at <http://www.medicaid.gov/Federal-Policy-Guidance/Downloads/CIB-07-07-14.pdf>.

³ AMA Current Procedural Terminology, CPT 2022 Professional Edition, pg. 815 "97155: Adaptive behavioral treatment with protocol modification, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional, which may include simultaneous direction of technician, face to face with one patient, each 15 minutes."

⁴ www.abacodes.org



According to the most recent estimates from the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in every 36 children⁵ is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. This means that more than 2% of Hawaii's children who are on Medicaid have an autism spectrum disorder and to date, many are unable to access the most basic, evidence-based treatments for their diagnosis.

On behalf of CASP and our member organizations serving individuals with autism in Hawaii, we ask that you pass HB2712, which appropriates funds for increased reimbursement rates for ABA service providers. Thank you for your work in the past and moving forward to ensure that all MedQUEST beneficiaries, including children with autism, have access to life-changing, evidence-based care.

Respectfully,



Mariel C. Fernandez, M.S., BCBA, LBA (TX)
Vice President of Government Affairs
The Council of Autism Service Providers
mfernandez@casproviders.org
334-332-2504

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm-community-report/executive-summary.html>



House of Representatives
Committee on Finance
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Monday, February 26, 2024
10:00 am
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

SUPPORT HB2712 HD1 RELATING TO AUTISM

Honorable Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Hawai'i Association for Behavior Analysis (HABA) we thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB2712 HD1 which appropriates funds to increase the funding for applied behavior analysis services for persons with autism** and requires the Department of Human Services to obtain maximum federal matching funds and pursue all other funding sources.

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is a medically necessary service provided for QUEST beneficiaries under the age of 21 with an autism diagnosis for intensive behavioral therapy (IBT), as mandated by section 1905(r) of the Social Security Act for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT). Autism is classified as a mental health condition, included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) and ABA treatment is the leading behavioral health treatment to ameliorate symptoms associated with this diagnosis and focuses on improving independence and decreasing the level of supports and services needed over the lifetime.

The state took great strides in the last legislative session to bring Medicaid payments to 100% of Medicare. Unfortunately for ABA providers, this did not include our services because the American Medical Association (AMA) Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) codes for ABA services are carrier priced, meaning the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) Medicare Physician Fee Schedule \(MPFS\)](#) do not currently set rates for our services. This has resulted in a lack of parity for these intensive behavioral health services in our state.

We thank the legislature for passing the concurrent resolution in 2023 which required the rate study for QUEST ABA rates. As noted in the final report ([DC233](#)), providers across the state have reported that recruiting and retaining a workforce has becoming increasingly difficult. Reimbursement rates for QUEST services were set in 2015 and have not increased, creating a hardship for behavioral health providers. This has resulted in significant delays for beneficiaries to access services, as well as not being able to meet the full service needs for children and families in our state. Additionally, some providers

have reported not accepting QUEST or not taking on any new QUEST patients due to the below market reimbursement rates.

QUEST beneficiaries are too often faced with a lack of access to services across the state, especially on neighbor islands. Providers willing to accept QUEST report having to maintain waitlists, with families sometimes waiting for years to access their medically necessary behavioral health treatment. Research demonstrates that early intensive intervention and provision of services in line with the [professional standards of care](#) for treatment dosage produce the best gains for individuals and can decrease the costs of care over the lifetime. **Investing in access to services when children are young decreases costs needed to support individuals across the lifespan.**

Due to low reimbursement rates and the high cost of living here in the islands, there is a shortage of providers, creating provider network adequacy issues. An increase in reimbursement rates would allow providers to pay livable wages and create additional stable jobs to serve QUEST beneficiaries.

We urge you to pass this bill to address the urgent need for increased rates for applied behavior analysis services for the Medicaid population. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Mahalo,



Kristen Koba-Burd, BCBA, LBA, CDP
Legislative Chair
Hawai'i Association for Behavior Analysis
Legislation@hawaiiaba.org



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

House of Representatives
Committee on Finance
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Monday, February 26, 2024
10:00 am
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

SUPPORT HB2712 HD1 RELATING TO AUTISM

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2712 HD1**. BAYADA is a not-for-profit health care company committed to serving our community. We provide services across the state, with behavioral health services for QUEST members on Oahu and Maui.

As a behavioral health service provider, we have struggled to meet the needs of children with autism on Med-QUEST due to the increased costs of operating a business without increased rates for our services. QUEST rates for the coverage of intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) for treatment of children under 21 years of age with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), also referred to as applied behavior analysis (ABA), were set in 2015 and have not increased, despite the increased costs of living and increased costs for employers over the last 8 years. Wages have gone up nearly 30% since 2015 in Hawai'i, forcing businesses to shoulder the cost without proportionate rate increases, making it harder to attract candidates and businesses to the field of supporting individuals with autism and their families.

We appreciate the efforts taken in 2023 to pass the resolution and complete a rate study of ABA QUEST rates. During the rate study process, we participated in stakeholder meetings and completed the provider survey. Our experience in these meetings and the subsequent results of the rate study echoed our experience as an ABA provider in the state—**our rates do not allow us to serve the children with autism and their families who need us**. As an organization, our values are compassion, excellence, and reliability; however, due to difficulties in attracting and retaining staff we find ourselves troubled that we cannot consistently deliver these values to our clients. We're receiving more applications than ever, and offering more conditional offers, however we're seeing lower position acceptance or transition to hired.



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

We have experienced increases in turnover due to staff needing to find higher paying jobs, often shifting to tourism instead of healthcare, to support themselves and their

families. We also see more and more staff who want to continue being an ABA provider choose to leave the state where they can make more and have a lower cost of living.

Currently, **we must maintain a waitlist for clients to access services because there is more demand than we are able to meet with our current providers.** At our Oahu location, 40% of those on our waitlist are QUEST members. At our Maui location, 66% are QUEST members. We closed our Big Island and Kauai insurance-based services, despite ongoing community need, due to losses based on unsustainable rates in 2018. These waitlists are only representative of our organization and are similar across providers.

We respectfully request the Committee pass this bill in support of increasing rates for what we believe are under-covered behavioral health services.

Mahalo,

Maile Martin

BAYADA Behavioral Health



MALAMA
P O N O
AUTISM
CENTER

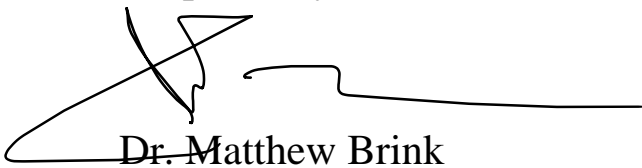
Legislators,

I am writing in support of HB2712.

Children with special needs such as autism are among the most vulnerable in our communities. Funding and support for children with autism has remained stagnant in the State of Hawai'i since 2015 and has left our current Medicaid rates among the lowest in the country. Sadly, many of the families relying on Medicaid are Native Hawai'ian and vulnerable populations in our community.

Please support the most vulnerable children in our community. Please support HB2712.

Respectfully,



Dr. Matthew Brink

Malama Pono Autism Center

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 10:17:23 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dustin Platter	Platter Behavioral Consulting	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We used the previous fiscal year. We have grown to accomidate the number of Quest members seeking treatment in the geographic area we serve. We also started a clinic location to increase family access to services and provide higher quality clinical care. Our turnover rate has been closer to 30% during this fiscal year ending in january 2024 and recruiting has slowed considerably. This is in contrast to our introduction of retirement and health benefits to all employees. This is likely due to competitive hourly rates in other industries and the comparative level of responsibility and training necessary to become an RBT. We offer competitive hourly rates, training completion bonuses and retirement and health benefits to retain and attract new hires. However, we are still experiencing a significant decrease in applicants and technicians completing the necessary training.

Payment rates are what we receive from listed providers. we estimate a need for a significant increase in reimbursement rates over the next year to increase our ability to serve more patients, the increasing cost of commercial space and the need to increase hourly rates to be competitive with other industries that do not require the same level of training before hiring. While payment (insurance reimbursement) rates have stayed the same since we started in 2021, to stay competitive, our hourly rates have increased on average by 35%.To maintain a competitive edge and avoid turnover we now offer medical, dental, vision, and retirement benefits with close to zero (1.9%) contribution from our employees.

As mentiioned above our recent cost increases, including retirement and health benefits, clinic space, and increasing hourly pay rates have created a margin that does not allow for growth to accomidate the growing number of Quest referrals recieved. a substantial rate increase will be necessary to continue to accomidate the number of referral and costs associated with care. As the owner / bcba / employee I have limited my own salary to ensure we can grow and meet the needs of our staff and clients. This will not be sustainable as more of my time and resources necessary to ensure quality care are needed for administration of the company and less time will be available to generate my own billable hours.

Our industry requires that potential technicians commit an average of six weeks to training and testing before being able to work with clients. Industries competing for the same workers are able to train on the job. In this geographic area where other industries can offer competitive hourly rates supplmented by tips and gratuities, our work becomes less appealing. Other industries generally have the ability to pass on the cost to the client as necessary and therefore adjust quickly to market fluctuations. Inflation has put a burden on all industries for costs of

goods and services. This has put a significant burden on consumers, and therefore our employees. We have adjusted as best we can to these burdens however, it is not sustainable and has affected our ability to accomidte the growing number of families seeking treatment for the complicated symptomology associated autism. Add to that the general perception that working with children with specials needs can be difficult adds to our need to offer more competitive hourly rates and benefits to attract good candidates.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:56:29 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Faith Thompson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:59:39 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anastasia Keller-Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I am submitting testimony in support of this bill to support our healthcare system to save more later. The more we can support individuals to be as independent as possible now, the less we will all spend to support individuals who will end up in settings that cost far more when they do not have the skills to complete daily tasks by themselves. If we do support the agencies and organizations to hire staff, then we will all "pay" later.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 10:01:24 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Bolgren	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

As a long time provider, I have seen first hand the difficulties there is in hiring and maintaining qualified staff to work in this field. I support an increase in QUEST rates for ABA.

Thank you,

Amanda Bolgren

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 10:12:16 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a local provider of ABA services I have seen waitlists for services grow as providers are unable to hire and retain staff. Increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates will help employers better compensate their dedicated ABA providers. I am in strong support of this bill.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 10:14:13 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beatrice Pujol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 10:31:33 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josliene Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:38:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Sato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, My name is Sara Sato and I was born and raised in Hawai'i. I have worked with individuals with disabilities in a variety of capacities since 1999 and have worked in the DOE, home, community, and clinic environments. I currently serve as the Clinical Director of an ABA agency in Honolulu, Hawai'i that employs approximately 30 staff. There are many reasons why a rate increase is so important to us.

First, as the minimum wage rates have risen and many other jobs out there are also raising their starting rates, we need to receive reimbursement at a rate that would allow us to attract top talent. The job of a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) is TOUGH. RBTs are implementing procedures day in and day out with learners who can engage in severe challenging behaviors such as head banging, aggression, Pica, self-injury, and elopement. Our RBTs are put through intensive training, required to implement procedures with fidelity, and ensure the safety and dignity of their learners while also ensuring their well-being. Our staff our dedicated, want to make a difference, and are so passionate about the success of our learners, but as I mentioned above, it is HARD work. From an objective stance, I can understand wanting to seek better pay in a job that requires less of you, to make ends meet. However, we want to retain staff who are passionate, want to put in the hard work, and truly make a difference. To provide quality care, we need to be reimbursed at an acceptable rate.

To provide quality care, there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes. Some tasks need to be completed when the client isn't present. For example, creating materials that will make it easier for the learner to understand. We need to meet as teams to discuss client progress, what can be better, and how to ensure consistency across team members. If additional training is needed that can't solely be accomplished in session with the learner, we are committed to paying for that time so that our staff our well trained and feel supported. These are just a few examples of where the reimbursement rate alone, doesn't cover it.

Finally, there is an overall shortage of ABA providers in the state. There are waitlists across agencies to provide services. We need to attract more people to the field so we can meet the needs of individuals with autism and their families. If the rates are not increased I am afraid that those providing ABA services in Hawai'i will decrease and this in turn will create an even bigger issue of more individuals and their families NOT receiving care at a critical point. This will put further strain on the state to provide care for an aging population. Please allocate funding to this worthy cause. Please help us provide the best quality care possible so we can truly make a difference

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 11:40:07 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love helping kids with autism and letting them receive the ABA services they need. I also want to advocate for the other kids on waitlists to be able to access the necessary services they need. With the increase of children on the spectrum with disorders, I feel that not only are the kids needs are important to being met, but also us as RBT's as well. I love my job and assisting these kids giving them the services they need, so I wish that you support this bill, so that kids can receive the services they need.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 12:06:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Noochan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.
- I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.
- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 12:20:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberlynn Galapon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. The cost of living in our state as well as the numerous waitlists for services are also other factors that would greatly benefit from increasing the rates to meet and keep up with our and the clients' needs.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 12:30:59 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie L Gonsalves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments: I fully support this bill!

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 12:38:14 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shanon Isokane	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 1:47:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashten Balsimo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT who works with children with autism. I have seen the positive effect ABA can have on improving children's skill sets. Skill sets that include verbal, academic, and behavioral. The state must invest in providing children of Hawaii who require additional assistance services the best foundational opportunities for future success. ABA therapy must be available and expanded for the children in Hawaii who need it.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 2:01:07 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dallas Star	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill to increase Medicaid rates for ABA services based on the rate study completed which detailed the deficits in the current rates that were set in 2015 that have failed to increase along with the cost of living and inflation in the state. ABA provides a medically necessary service to families most in need of care while also providing a career path for our local students and community in healthcare. Without this increase families will remain on lengthy waitlists and our graduating students will continue to have limited options when entering the workforce.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 2:20:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yuki Loyd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children and adults with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need to provide them with the best care possible.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 2:34:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Rodriguez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 2:59:55 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheyenne F Chavez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.
- As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.
- I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.
- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 5:56:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Ann Aparra	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it is difficult with the cost of living in Hawai'i. I support rate increases for ABA so that more children with autism are able to access the support they need to succeed.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 6:23:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jared thornton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I feel that the teachers, parents and children need all the support they can get. I strongly support this bill.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 6:30:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynette Clemente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

AS an RBT, I LOVE the work I do, but it is very difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA. The rates for providing ABA services have remained the same since 2015, despite increased costs of living. We NEED rate increases to meet the needs of children with Autism in our state. I fully support the rate increase for ABA so more children with Autism can move off the wait list to access the services they need.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 7:23:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Logan Gonzaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

WE CAN'T AFFORD HAWAII! And ABA in hawaii needs RBT's and BCBA's. Although wages and the price of goods and services have gone, up the ABA rates have remained the same. I am, as well as most people on Oahu, having a difficult time paying for goods and services, and even utilities. I am buying less groceries with the same amount of money as I did before Covid.

If state legislators can afford to pay themselves more than a 50% increase in their salaries a year, I don't understand how ABA, a critical service to a portion of Hawaii's population, can be overlooked. I need your help to pay for my utilities, food, and the roof over my head. Without your help, I will have to switch out of this field, ABA, into the trades area such as plumbers, electricians, and construction workers to make up end's meet.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 7:30:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keely Dougherty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 8:02:50 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelly McCloskey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 8:26:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenifer Olin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It's vital to allocate funds to boost support for applied behavioral analysis services for those with autism, and I fully back the approval of this bill.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 8:57:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gina Gillstrom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

Mahalo,

Gina Gillstrom, RBT

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:10:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joyal gaspar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

ABA Services are needed in Hawaii.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:25:30 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Khloe Vanderford	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state so they can access the services they need.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:31:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaitlin Preciado	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an experienced practitioner in applied behavior analysis (ABA) and a board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA), I firmly support the proposed legislation to raise QUEST rates for ABA services. My position is informed by extensive observations of ABA's significant benefits for children with autism and the observed challenges encountered by their families and the Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) serving them within our community. The enactment of this bill is imperative to surmount the considerable obstacles in attracting and maintaining competent ABA practitioners and to ensure they are justly compensated, thereby broadening the availability of crucial services to a more significant number of children with autism.

The static rates since 2015 have severely impeded our capacity to provide top-tier care and appropriately remunerate our dedicated professionals, including RBTs and BCBA's. The rising cost of living only intensifies these difficulties, jeopardizing our ability to maintain the dedication required to offer the highest standard of care.

From my professional vantage point, I have observed the life-changing impact of ABA therapy on children and the immense sense of relief and hope it bestows upon their families. We must increase service accessibility; higher rates would allow an expanded group of families to access ABA therapy, thus providing innumerable children with the crucial support they need for a more promising future.

Advocating for this bill goes beyond a simple financial proposition; it represents a commitment to the developmental well-being of our children and a recognition of the unwavering commitment of the professionals in this field. This legislation is a pivotal move toward reducing waitlists and facilitating prompt access to ABA services, significantly improving the lives of children with autism and their families.

I strongly encourage your endorsement of the bill to elevate QUEST rates for ABA services, which will cultivate a more inclusive and nurturing environment for children with autism and pay homage to the invaluable efforts of ABA professionals.

I am keenly interested in further dialogue on how we can make a substantial impact jointly. Your support for this pressing matter is crucial. Thank you for considering this important request.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:33:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deborah Ho'ohuli-McKinney	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to provide testimony in strong support of efforts to increase the QUEST rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services.

As a provider within the field, I have personally witnessed the challenges associated with recruiting and retaining qualified professionals. Therefore, I fully support increasing QUEST rates for ABA services to help more children with autism access necessary care. Despite rising costs since 2015, rates have remained stagnant, hindering timely access to vital services. By taking action to adjust rates, we can ensure that these vulnerable individuals receive the support and care they urgently require.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in *support* of HB2712 HD 1.

Sincerely,

Deborah Ho'ohuli-McKinney, BCBA, LBA

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2024 9:54:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ivy Kobayakawa Sylva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Kona clinic is greatly needed. It has helped my gr-son grow so immensely, I can't described how grateful I am for the clinic

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 3:41:22 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Faith Kahakelii	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a clinician in the field, I have seen the difficulty in and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA. Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

I strongly support rate increases for ABA, as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who has been closely involved in the field for over 10 years, I can attest to the critical importance of adequately compensating ABA professionals for their expertise and dedication to improving the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

ABA therapy is widely recognized as one of the most effective interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities. Its evidence-based practices have consistently demonstrated significant positive outcomes in improving communication, social skills, behavior management, and overall quality of life for those receiving services.

However, providing high-quality ABA therapy requires a considerable investment of time, resources, and expertise. RBT professionals undergo extensive education and training to acquire the necessary skills to implement individualized treatment plans tailored to the unique needs of each client. Additionally, ongoing professional development and supervision are essential to ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of ABA interventions.

Despite the invaluable contributions of ABA professionals, the current reimbursement rates often fail to reflect the true cost of delivering quality services. Inadequate compensation not only undermines the sustainability of ABA programs but also jeopardizes the ability of providers to attract and retain qualified professionals, ultimately compromising the quality of care provided to individuals and families in need.

A rate increase for ABA services is not only warranted but also imperative to address the growing demand for quality care and to support the continued growth and development of the ABA workforce. By adequately compensating ABA professionals, we can ensure the availability of high-quality services that empower individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

I urge you to carefully consider the significant impact that a rate increase would have on the accessibility and quality of ABA services within our community. Your support in advocating for fair and equitable reimbursement rates is crucial in advancing the field of ABA and promoting the well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 6:44:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eliza Lipp	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support rate increases for ABA services. I strongly believe we have to act now and investing now will decrease the costs in the long run.

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 7:13:59 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maile Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of the waitlists to access the services they need.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 7:59:47 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Burdt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a former service provider for adults with autism on Maui, I have seen the significant difference in outcomes when ABA services are provided early and at the needed intensity. Failure to provide access to services for children results in increased need for intensive supports and therefore increased costs to the state over the lifetime.

I strongly support this bill and increasing provider rates for ABA so that more children with Med-QUEST can access their medically necessary behavioral services.

Mahalo,

Brian Burdt

Maui

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 8:04:44 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bonnie Koba	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support increases to rates for ABA providers. Due to the low reimbursement rates, there's a significant shortage of Med-QUEST providers, especially in Maui County.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 8:52:13 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabrielle Galler-Rimm	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a developmental and behavioral pediatrician, the only providers on Maui who diagnoses Autism Spectrum Disorder, and an owner of a BCBA direct ABA agency on Maui, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

Sincerely

Gabrielle Galler-Rimm M.D,

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 8:56:24 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby Holden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I work as an RBT, and I really love the work that I do, but it's terribly difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA. I am grateful for your support in this matter.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:08:09 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tiffany Hankins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the need for rate increases in ABA services. Despite starting coverage in 2015, ABA service rates have stagnated, failing to match the increasing cost of living. This stagnation significantly impairs providers' capacity to recruit and retain qualified staff. Consequently, children with autism who require ABA services face lengthy waitlists, depriving them of essential support.

It is critical that we address this issue by raising rates for ABA services in Hawaii. This adjustment is vital to ensuring that Hawaii's autism community receives the necessary support promptly and without unnecessary obstacles.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:20:06 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melanie Aki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill for ABA rate increases

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:21:21 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Torres	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA services. Investing now will decrease the costs in the long run.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:26:00 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leia Reynolds	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I love working in ABA and helping individuals as well as their families and support systems, which improves social outcomes of our community as a whole. This is a career that I pursue with a lot of passion, but due to increasing living costs and inflation, it is becoming almost impossible to survive on the pay rates that we currently receive. Those in this industry want to help others and provide services to improve the lives of others, but we also must take care of ourselves first and work in occupations that can provide us a secure financial lifestyle. If this bill does not go through, I worry that there will be less and less individuals interested in ABA, or possibly interested but cannot pursue ABA due to their limited finances, and this would have an overall negative impact on communities in the small and large scale, as if individuals with ASD are not getting services, it will make the lives of parents, teachers, and community members harder.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:38:58 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsea Gornichec	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:46:35 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Letesha Driskell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider I have seen the difficulty in gaining and maintaining a qualified workforce to work with this vulnerable population because the wage is much lower than what is required to live in the great state of Hawaii. Many of the best, most qualified service providers are having to work 2 positions working more than 12 hours per day 6-7 days per week causing burn out. If receiving better wage, they could provider better services to our clients and be able to live a more comfortable life. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 9:46:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shauna Paul	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB2712 Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Aloha, Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

I support increased pay rates and funding for medically-necessary ABA services, and I support these same ABA services to begin to be provided to individuals who turn 21 years old and older through the Medicaid insurance and health plans.

Considerations:

- The annual Social Security Cost of Living pay adjustments to beneficiaries range from 1.3% to 8.7%, well over 23% total since only 2019.
- Individuals who require medically-necessary ABA lose their ABA services under Medicaid upon turning 21 years old. These individuals with an autism diagnosis are discriminated against due to their disability of autism. The federal and state mental health parity laws require these mental health services be covered to the same extent as physical health services.
- Medicaid beneficiaries who need medically-necessary ABA to benefit from the Medicaid I/DD Waiver program and other state services at age 21 and older are currently not able to receive ABA under the state Medicaid Quest health plans. For example, an individual, such as my son, who is provided with an annual Medicaid I/DD Waiver budget to cover community learning services and respite, cannot access entitled services because of inappropriate behaviors due to disability — **treatable by ABA** — defeating the purpose of services to keep such individuals at home and in the community, not an institution. The current Medicaid I/DD waiver's scope and purpose of "ABA-like" services are limited, not only the number of service providers.
- Reference: SR114, SD1, Adopted 2022. Department of Human Services: The waiver services for individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities are delivered by the Department of Health's Developmental Disabilities Division. While they do not provide Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) per se, similar services are provided to individuals who are 21 and older." (March 21, 2022) https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session/archives/measure_indiv_Archives.aspx?billtype=SR&billnumber=114&year=2022

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Linda Elento, February 26, 2024, 10:00am

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 10:00:47 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen McLeod	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I continue to see the difficulty with hiring and retaining qualified providers over the years. I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. Rates have not changed since 2015.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 10:26:27 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kadey Chambless	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 4:20:09 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Lynn Oset	easterseals hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 5:04:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Revuelto	BTSH	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.
- I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.
- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 10:23:04 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie Mitchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in Hawaii.

HB-2712-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 8:46:42 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/26/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Lau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support the recommended QUEST increases so we can continue supporting our community. Thank you!