



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
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February 12, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senate Bill 3001 – Relating to Autism

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 3001 – Relating to Autism.

This bill would appropriate funds to increase the funding for applied behavioral analysis services for persons with autism. These services have a positive long term impact on individuals with autism, but the failure to increase the reimbursement rate for almost a decade has made it difficult for Med-QUEST beneficiaries to obtain such services.

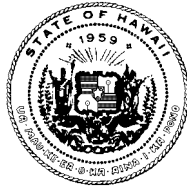
For the above reasons, we support Senate Bill 3001.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

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'OKELE

February 11, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3001 – RELATING TO AUTISM.**

Hearing: February 12, 2024, 1:02 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol & Video Conference

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

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to increase funding for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services and require DHS to obtain the maximum federal matching funds available for the expenditure.

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), 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

February 11, 2024

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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.



WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Monday, February 12, 2024
1:02 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

STRONG SUPPORT SB3001 RELATING TO AUTISM

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SB3001**. 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,

Josliene Miller
BAYADA Behavioral Health



COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Monday, February 12, 2024
1:02 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

STRONG SUPPORT SB3001 RELATING TO AUTISM

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, 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 SB3001 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.

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.

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.

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

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:34:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As an executive director and being in charge of staffing, it continues to be one of the most taxing positions in our company. Providers come and go frequently due to this position, being at best, temporary. Medicaide reimbursement rates have not increased since the onset of ABA and as other fields of practice increase their pay rates, we are not able to increase ours. As inflation sky rocketed and the cost of living increased, we have not been able to significantly help our staff financially. This causes providers not only to resign from their position but to leave the field all together. Allong with this, many of our new applicants are from the mainland due to local staff needing higher paying jobs to servive. Servicing this population is difficult and often involves clients with extreme needs and behaviors. This is not an easy job and it should be paid fairly in order to appropriately service the children of Hawaii. Please increaes the rates so we can pass this along to all of our staff and improve not only our hiring but our retention as well. Thank you.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:22:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacey Fernandez	Testifying for Behavior Analysis No Ka Oi	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:37:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

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.

11Feb 2024

IN SUPPORT OF SB3001

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

I am writing **IN SUPPORT OF SB 3001**. 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



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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 BCBAs, the duration for ABA treatment will be extended due to the inconsistency with RBTs/BCBAs 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 on the floor, working with a MedQuest kid. Again, contributing to a network adequacy problem.

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!) for the Economy Fares that MedQuest reimburses, 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:



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E-mail: info@autismbehaviorconsulting.com
www.ABCGroupHawaii.com

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.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Wiech', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amy Wiech, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA
Executive Director and Founder
Licensed Behavior Analyst Since 2004



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Date: February 8th, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

From: Hawai'i Early Intervention Coordinating Council (HEICC)

Re: Support for **SB3001**, Relating to Autism

The Early Intervention Section is advised by the Hawaii Early Intervention Coordinating Council (HEICC). The HEICC is established as required by state law ([Hawaii Revised Statutes §321-353](#)) and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

HEICC strongly supports passage of SB 3001, which appropriates funds to increase the funding for Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) services for persons with autism.

Rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living. We need rate increases to continue to recruit and retain staff and to meet our federal mandate of supporting all keiki with special needs.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in support of SB 3001**.

Kerrie Urosevich

Kerrie A. Urosevich
Chair

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 2:21:45 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Libby	Testifying for Mau Loa Learning LLC	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 10:54:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anna Zelenskiy	Testifying for Anna Zelenskiy, BCBA	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. As a provider I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need and make sure providers prioritize delivering services to them.



Date: February 7, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for **SB3001**, Relating to Autism

Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector collaborative designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners work to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

ECAS strongly supports passage of SB 3001, Appropriates funds to increase the funding for applied behavioral analysis (ABA) services for persons with autism.

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.

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

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony **in support of SB3001**.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 4:24:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Crystal Thomas	Testifying for Horizons Academy of Maui	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider of ABA services, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. By increasing rates, we can support and retain our current staff and recruit new staff into the field. Our direct service providers need to be paid an adequate wage and rates would help providers remain competitive with providers who do not serve QUEST customers. 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. Children with autism are waitlisted daily and are unable to access the services they need due to providers' difficulty hiring and retaining staff. Please support efforts to increase QUEST rates for ABA.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 1:57:54 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Suzanne Ely	Testifying for Maui Learning Academy	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. As a provider, I understand the challenges of finding and retaining qualified professionals in this field.

Written Testimony

Committee on Human Services

Monday, February 12, 2024 / 1:00 pm
Conference Room 225, Hawai'i State Capitol

By

Christine K. Walton, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA
President, Behavior Analysis No Ka Oi, Inc.

SB3001– REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES' MED-QUEST DIVISION TO TAKE STEPS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT PROVIDER RATES ARE INCREASED FOR APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS SERVICES.

Chair Senator San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of** SB3001, which appropriates funding for the Med-Quest division for non-covered or under-covered behavioral health services for Med-Quest beneficiaries.

I am the President of Behavior Analysis No Ka Oi, Inc., a Kaka'ako-based clinic serving people with autism for over 15 years. At our clinic, we provide applied behavior analysis (ABA), a medically necessary, empirically validated treatment approach for children diagnosed with autism and other related disorders. Since the passing of Luke's Law in 2015, which requires health insurance coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism, there has been no change to the Medicaid fee schedule for ABA.

The operational costs of running a clinic have increased significantly since 2015. Specifically, costs related to rent, health insurance for employees, other employee benefits, and the IRS standard mileage reimbursement rate for employees who commute to the families' homes or other community sites have all increased.

As a direct result of no increases to the Medicaid fee schedule for ABA, we have been struggling with hiring. Interviewees request competitive wages, comparable to school-based services, which reimburse at a higher rate. We struggle not only with recruiting the best providers but also with retaining our most qualified providers, where several have relocated to the mainland, where the cost of living is lower, and fee schedules are higher. We are simply unable to serve clients due to the challenges of recruiting and retaining providers, resulting in a current wait list for services of approximately 3 years. While the passage of Luke's Law was a

monumental advancement in securing services for the people of Hawai'i, it is not impactful if those it was meant to ensure services for cannot find providers.

In conclusion, in order to provide medically necessary services, funding for the Med-Quest division for non-covered or under-covered behavioral health services for Med-Quest beneficiaries must be increased.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:03:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Josliene Miller	Individual	Support	In Person

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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 2:37:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristian Guynes	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 4:54:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JULIET PABO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom it May Concern,

- 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,

Juliet Pabo

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 4:56:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meredith Reagan	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:17:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patti-Anne Takakura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support rate increases for ABA, so more children with autism can move off the waitlists and get the services they need.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 5:58:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andy Kagemoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you Chair San Buenaventura for the opportunity to testify in support of SB3001!

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 6:13:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joelle Dewater	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider I have seen first hand the difficulty in hire and employing RBTs in a timely manner. I have also heard from families in the community about extensive waitlist and wait times for services to be accessed that are desperately needed! I support an increase in this bill!

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 6:57:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Manner	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.

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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 7:01:03 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kiana-Rae Vendetta	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:05:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cayla Nakatsukasa	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 8:27:23 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

The amount tod individuals on waitlists for services is astronomical. I support rate increases for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need so that we don't end up paying more later related to impact our health systems will have to manage as people age in place with decreased skills and abilities

As the rates for ABA services have remained the same since coverage started in 2015, despite increased costs of living we are losing workers and agencies to support or clients. We need rate increases to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 9:03:27 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Akiko Lau	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 11:09:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenny Osborne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I can understand the turnover rate for RBT's based on pay rate. If RBT's were compensated more for all of their hard work with clients, then they would be less likely to want to leave the field. Then services would be more available to those in need who are on the spectrum, who are put on waiting lists because of lack of staff available to provide services.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 7:31:16 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. The agency I work for is struggling to retain RBT's due to the low pay rate, which impacts our learners. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 8:04:46 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Liu	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:11:37 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yahaira Gomez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider, It has been difficult to hire qualified providers and pay them competitively working with the current reimbursement rates. I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA. We are committed to serving Hawaii and reaching those who are underserved. We provide services to individuals in the autism spectrum from 0 to 21 years of age. This increase would ensure that we are able to serve more families.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:29:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As someone working as a RBT, I enjoy the work that I do and supporting individuals that benefit from ABA services; nonetheless, considering the steady increase of the cost of living in Hawai'i, by increasing the rates of QUEST for ABA services, providers will be able to sufficiently retain their workers to continue aiding children and adults with autism in our state.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:22:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

It's crucial to address challenges in hiring and retaining qualified providers, and increased QUEST rates for ABA can be a positive step in supporting these efforts.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:33:41 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherri Nakamura	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:35:27 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charissa Taylor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a provider myself in the field for over 5 years now, I have seen the difficulty in the field when it comes to hiring and retaining qualified employees. With the rising costs of living, people are finding it difficult to maintain a steady enough income in the field as coverage costs have remained the same for the last 9+ years. We need rate increases to continue to provide quality services to meet the needs of children with autism in our state.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 9:37:02 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maritza Oregon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an ABA provider, I have witnessed the immense challenges with hiring and retaining qualified providers, especially Registered Behavior Technicians. I support rate increases for ABA so that more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

Additional items for thought

The Islands currently scored 179.2 on the Cost-of-Living Index. Hawaii's average cost of living is 1.79x higher than the National average. The average Hawai'i median household income is \$91,000; the average 100% median income home price is \$722,000. The average 100% median 1br rent is \$2,456/unit.

A lack of high-paying jobs and a high cost of living put 41% of all residents at or below the ALICE Index.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 10:40:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aulani Latorre-Holt	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 10:43:44 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kylie Teramoto	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 10:49:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Torres	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:13:56 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a provider, I support rate increases for applied behavior analysis (ABA) so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:21:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristin M Ho	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:22:02 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelli Li	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 2:25:10 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a professional deeply engaged in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), my advocacy for the bill to increase QUEST rates for ABA services is rooted in extensive observation of the profound impact these services have on children with autism, as well as the challenges faced by their parents and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) in our state. This legislation is crucial for addressing the significant hurdles in recruiting and retaining skilled ABA providers and ensuring they receive fair compensation, thus expanding access to essential services for more children with autism.

Since 2015, the unchanged rates have critically hindered our ability to deliver high-quality care and adequately reward our devoted professionals, including RBTs and fellow BCBAs. The escalating cost of living exacerbates these challenges, making it increasingly difficult to sustain the commitment necessary for providing the highest level of care.

Through my professional lens, I have witnessed the transformative effect of ABA on children and the relief and hope it brings to their families. Making these services more accessible is imperative, as increased rates would enable a broader spectrum of families to benefit from ABA, offering countless children the support needed for a brighter future.

Supporting this bill transcends a mere financial commitment; it signifies a pledge to the developmental needs of our children and acknowledges the dedication of the professionals who serve them. It is a critical step towards eliminating waitlists and ensuring timely access to ABA services, dramatically benefiting children with autism and their families.

I urge your support for the bill to increase QUEST rates for ABA services, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive framework for children with autism and recognizing the invaluable work of ABA professionals.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:26:05 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hannah Brown	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:35:22 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather Kruse	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a RBT I support this bill to increase ABA rates. With the cost of living going up, and food prices sky rocketing it is difficult to live life daily without stressing over finances.

As a parent of a child with autism I support this bill to increase ABA rates as well. I know how hard it is to find a consistent RBT for my child, especially when the turnover rate is so high, being in the field myself. Making sure that the child has a consistent RBT is vital in their growth and learning through ABA. ABA has helped my son be able to communicate effectively with peers and adult staff in school. However, due to the low percentage of RBT's sometimes he does not have access to a sub RBT. Increasing the rates would definitely help bring more staff in who want to be paid what they are worth.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:59:25 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Angelica Castro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an ABA provider myself, and as a sibling to someone who receives ABA services, I've seen the difference it makes in the individual's life. I support this bill so that more children in our state can access ABA.

As an RBT I love the work I do, however, with the increased cost of living many providers are leaving this field to seek out higher-paying jobs. The work that ABA providers do is crucial to helping children with autism. With this bill, we will be able to move more children off the waiting list and compensate providers for all their dedication.

As a sibling to someone who is diagnosed with autism, I appreciate the providers who have supported my brother throughout his development. These providers have played a salient role in helping my brother get to where he is now. Their endless dedication to supporting my family has significantly helped my family's functioning. I believe that an increase in rates will be beneficial for these providers and all the hard work that they do.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 12:19:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristen Davis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a professional specializing in claims billing and reimbursement for ABA practices, I have witnessed first hand how the low ABA reimbursement rates impact businesses and the families they aim to serve. I fully support an increase to ABA rates as they are necessary to retain staff, provide quality services, and move families off of waitlists.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 1:01:37 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Siyuan Wang	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 12:12:36 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenicca Tamura	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 1:48:59 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Davenport	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an ABA provider, I find the work to be both challenging and incredibly rewarding. Helping individuals improve their behavior and quality of life is fulfilling beyond measure. However, it's important to acknowledge that despite the demanding nature of the job, wages within the field are often lower than they should be. Despite this, many of us remain dedicated to our mission because we believe in the transformative power of ABA therapy.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 3:26:44 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Allison Schurtz	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 4:48:30 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jubilee Macadangdang	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 4:56:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachel Koenig	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 10:12:28 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessie Mitchell	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. Early intervention will save our community money in the long run!

Respectfully submitted

Jessie Mitchell, MA, LBA

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 8:53:10 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rachelle Paudan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love working with children with autism or any learning or behavioral difficulty. It opened my eyes as an RBT how much we are needed to provide services that is greatly needed in this population. I've seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers and fully support efforts to increase Quest rates for ABA. It will help with the increase in the cost of living in Hawaii. This rate increase have remained the same since 2015 and with rising costs this need in increase of rate will help meet the needs of autism in our state greatly.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 2:03:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support raising the QUEST rates for ABA services. These rates have stagnated since 2015, failing to keep pace with the escalating living costs. By bolstering these rates, we can ensure that more children with autism have access to vital care, enabling them to move off lengthy waitlists and receive the support they require. I support SB3001 as a crucial step in positively impacting the lives of numerous families in our community.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 1:59:41 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As an RBT, I love my work, but it's challenging to make ends meet with the high cost of living. Please support this bill to increase rates for ABA.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 8:00:00 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christie Maxson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As an RBT, I love the work I do, but it's difficult with the cost of living. RBT's are very important to integrating and helping children become valuable citizens to our society. There are a big shortage of RBT's, and I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA so more children with autism can move off of waitlists to access the services they need!

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 9:11:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 7:26:38 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers. It breaks my heart to see the amount of children and families waiting to receive critically necessary medical services and how the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers has a direct impact on our community. I fully support efforts to increase the QUEST rates for ABA.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 2:43:19 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

Rates for autism coverage have stayed stagnant since 2015. As a provider, I have seen the difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified providers. I fully support increasing the QUEST rates for ABA.

Thank you,

Amanda

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 9:20:27 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB3001 focused on appropriating funds to increase QUEST rates for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services for individuals with autism. As a Maui resident involved in supporting families to access needed healthcare services, I have personally seen how the low reimbursement rates and our high cost of living creates access issues for children. Families face long delays and I strongly support any effort the legislature can take to address this access to care gap through increased provider rates.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 11:27:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jasmine Curatolo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm an RBT, and I love what I do, but myself and many other RBTs are struggling with the cost of living. Please support this bill and increase the rates for ABA.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 9:32:04 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stefany Tucker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am passionately writing in support of increased QUEST (Medicaid) rates for ABA services for many reasons, but ultimately to support the vulnerable population of individuals who only benefit from receiving this service.

For many families and individuals, receiving this service is a long wait. The clients are identified with needs so intense and impactful that they would benefit greatly from access to ABA service. Their names are taken down and added to a waitlist until qualified personnel such as an LBA/BCBA and an RBT are available. During this wait, these individuals lose precious and invaluable time. The longer an individual is without the necessary treatment and interventions, the longer they continue to struggle. If this bill is passed, LBA/BCBA and RBT positions will be more attractive and competitive, assisting with employee retention and expanding the professional team of LBA/BCBA's and RBT's. Individuals and families in need will have quicker access to service and less time wasted on waitlists, thus increasing the chances for meaningful gains and positive outcomes. As a result of these meaningful gains and positive outcomes, they are taught skills and behaviors (e.g., communication, social skills, safety skills, health and personal care, independent living, etc.) to support where they are at and put on a path for a more independent trajectory. With those gains it is likely they will require less costly and intensive assistance in their futures as adults in the community.

The heart of this service is to provide early and effective treatment to clients in need. The aim is to teach essential skills and imperative behaviors as soon as possible so that these individuals grow and develop into the most successful, productive, and independent versions of themselves. Their families want the greatest possible outcomes for their child's future. The cost of a lifetime of service, therapy, support, and assistive living is unfathomable. If clients in need do not access this service, it is likely a larger cost of government and family assistance will be required to cover their needs for the duration of their life. By approving an increase in QUEST (Medicaid) rates for ABA service, we can invest in these clients and families now and likely have a more independent, safe, productive, and inclusive community.

As mentioned, an increase in QUEST (Medicaid) rates for ABA services will allow for companies to hire and retain the LBA/BCBA's and RBT's who oversee, manage, and provide the direct ABA service. Many professionals in this field are leaving due to the increasing discrepancy between the current wage and the cost of living, as Quest (Medicaid) rates have not increased in nearly a decade yet the cost of living in Hawaii has and continues to increase

without hesitation. As a result of this discrepancy, many of the trained and qualified professionals are leaving this field and pursuing other more substantial means of income.

Currently, I work in the public school system as an LBA/BCBA. There have been numerous cases where RBT's and/or LBA's switch companies for a better wage and leave their client who was once receiving service without the service and support that has been deemed necessary. The client's name is then returned to the waitlist, while they do their best to participate in crowded and understaffed classrooms. In this scenario, ABA professionals are in a challenging position and ultimately must make sacrifices to do what is best for them and their families. In the end, the client's service is interrupted with an immediate halt until the position(s) can be filled again.

Each day, the LBA team is notified of daily vacant RBT positions needing to be filled for clients who are present and waiting in need. Companies and school district administration do their best to fill these needs, even if only temporarily. At the end of the day, the LBA team is notified of all the clients who did not receive service. Currently, there are not enough service providers to satisfy the ever growing need. As an LBA who experiences this struggle, it is incredibly disheartening to see clients firsthand in the absence of the appropriate service they require. By passing the increase in QUEST (Medicaid) rates proposal, companies can provide fair compensation and recruit and retain more talented and educated professionals. This would mitigate RBT's and/or LBA's switching companies for better compensation, client cases filled and staffed regularly, and provide continuity of service for those in need.

Please carefully consider this testimony and approve to increase QUEST (Medicaid) ABA service rates, bill SB3001, and contribute to the supporting clients and families in need.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 6:34:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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 waitlists to access the services they need.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 7:37:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amely Dela Cruz	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.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 11:07:10 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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 are also other factors that would greatly benefit from increasing the rates to meet and keep up with our and the clients' needs.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 11:09:02 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Javan Fernandez	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.

LATE

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 1:11:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shanda Strickland	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In order for services to continue, and ensure its done so through highly qualified and commitres professionals, I respectfully urge you to support this bill.

LATE

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 8:00:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

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

Comments:

I, Anna Reynolds MA, BCBA, LBA, submit this testimony in support of SB3001. Due to the continued increase in the cost of living, in the state of Hawai'i, accompanied with the increase in all facets of living (e.g. housing, food, gas, etc) and running a business, whether corporate or private practice, the current reimbursement rates for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services, supply and demand are misaligned. Reimbursement rates for ABA services have remained stagnant, since 2015, as all other expenses have continued to increase. The results of this have been detrimental to the field of ABA, impacting the lives of patients and families who live with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and require medically necessary services, that we as Board Certified and Licensed Behavior Analysts provide in home and clinic settings. Currently, there is a deficit in ABA providers, from Registered Behavior Technicians to Board Certified Behavior Analysts. Without each of these levels of providers, ABA services cannot be effectively delivered, which in turn, costs the state more money, as services must be prolonged, as progress for patients and families, continue to struggle. Currently, the difficulty with hiring and retention of staff is largely, due in part to the low wages, for the difficulty of the work required to work within the ASD community. This includes reimbursement rates, and the often-cumbersome commutes to patients' homes. This has created exceptionally long wait lists for families to receive ABA services (e.g. 2+ years); especially on outer islands, where resources are exceedingly limited. Unfortunately, reimbursement rates are a main culprit, as individual providers, small businesses, and large corporations are unable to provide sustainable income for providers. Inflation rates have increased the cost of living, and all businesses have increased their rates, to keep up to speed with the current economy. This is evident from the cost of food, gas, housing and for businesses, the expense of simple office supplies to HR requirements. Individuals are no longer able to afford most necessities, including health insurance. The testimony for an increase in reimbursement rates for ABA providers does not come from greed, rather from desperation to remain vigilant within the field, to provide medically necessary services, to patients and their families. Rates of ASD diagnosis continue to increase, with no decline in sight. Please consider my testimony in support of SB3001, on behalf of myself, my colleagues and most importantly the families that we serve.

Kind Regards,

Anna Reynolds MA, BCBA, LBA

LATE

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 7:53:14 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Fredeluces	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am in support of increase funding for Autism ABA therapy, more funds equals to helping more kids with Autism and helping families better their lifestyle by receiving services.

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 11:22:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shana Wailana Kukila	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: SB3001 Relating to Autism

POSITION: Support

The Senate Health and Human Services Committee should increase the pay as well as the amount of ABA workers in all state programs. Honorable Senators must also be aware that the Department of Human Services is currently in non-compliance with federal law because the department does not currently have or offer any services or appropriate supports for autistic children and their families in the state's child welfare services system. This is a violation of these children's rights under federal law, as well as a violation of their parents' rights.

Therefore, the State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services needs to provide qualified professionals in autism to make appropriate assessments and service plans with families, particularly those under the purview of CWS.

Please investigate this matter. I also urge the Hawai'i Disability Rights Center, the Hawai'i State Council on Disabilities, and the ACLU to look into the policies and treatment of all those who are affected by autism, along with other vulnerable, federally protected persons within all state programs such as CWS.

The state really needs to be in compliance with federal laws on behalf of vulnerable communities they have a duty of care for, or else they risk a class action lawsuit one day or worse, the state could indirectly or directly have caused the injury or death of these most vulnerable citizens in their care and custody. This is, in fact, a problem right now that needs addressing before it's too late. It was too late for our autistic child when he was brutally assaulted repeatedly by an untrained DOE bus aide on the DOE bus in 2019-2020. He should have been aided by an ABA on the bus, or another qualified individual, not someone who is unqualified, inflicting serious harm on our son and others on the bus. We can't leave our vulnerable disabled children in the hands of unqualified people, it's just not safe.

We need highly qualified individuals to meet these high needs populations, which is why they do need higher pay and they should be increased in positions within CWS. Please take this seriously in your budget considerations, because we all can agree that an ounce of protection is worth a pound if cure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this deeply personal matter that affects so many.

Shana W. Kukila

Mother

Hilo, Hawai'i

LATE

SB-3001

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 10:25:43 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/12/2024 1:02:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linda Elento	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair, Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

I ask your consideration to direct the Department of Human Services to amend the Medicaid state plan to eliminate the unlawful age cap of age 20 for Applied Behavior Analysis autism services. The age limit has no basis and is discriminatory due to disability -- autism. Treatment must be based on medical necessity. Make it simple, add ABA to benefits for Medicaid beneficiaries with autism who need ABA autism services. Refer to Hawai'i definitions of ABA, within the programs the state has created, including HRS autism ABA laws.

The Legislature has data in its two Reports to the Legislature regarding ABA, DC233 and DC349 relevant to this bill from DHS and DOE. Has the DOH provided recent data? How many students turn 21 and lose ABA under Medicaid but still need ABA? Parents/students need a say in services that are medically-necessary and providers. That is not the case when the school uses the IDEA to provide selected ABA services that must be both educationally and medically necessary, or in some cases when they decide to seek reimbursement/claiming through Medicaid. Is the DOE a bona fide medical provider for students who are eligible for IDEA? or only for 504 claims? and medically-necessary ABA? The IDEA states no medical services are covered, only for diagnostic purposes (see federal regulations for further clarification, HAR 8 -60). Other anti-disability discrimination federal and state laws (non-IDEA) (HRS 368-1.5, HAR 8-61, 89) require supplementary or related services/modifications.

After hearing the oral arguments in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on October 4, 2024, (Hawaii Disability Rights Center v. state), I believe the state agencies are not in agreement with the facts of what ABA is, what is required by the IDEA, the ADA, Sec. 504 of the Rehab. Act, and Medicaid laws. (Ref. Fry case and KM v. Tustin).

My testimony is the need for ABA for Medicaid beneficiaries who have autism turn 21 is not met through the school system, DOH Mental Health, Community services (substance abuse), HCBS. The I/DD Waiver program does not provide ABA as a Quest Integration health plan: the definitions of ABA, standards, and purpose are not equal. A Medicaid beneficiary who has autism doesn't necessarily want to go through the process of I/DD Waiver, and seek eligibility (with a good chance they are not eligible under limited I/DD standards/criteria) and services and providers in a third system (the churn and administrative costs are high and families and DD

workers are weary, and may not be trained to know everything nor believe they can work with other agencies without stepping on someone's toes or duplicating services.

The federal and state parity law seem to apply to this issue of health services continuing for this population, but their ABA behavioral treatments do not. There are no substitute medically-necessary services for ABA for this population. The I/DD Waiver can be modified again and assign the QI Plan to provide ABA as it does for beneficiaries under 21. The State Plan may be amended to request matching federal funds. Med-Quest may contract with its health plan organizations to cover ABA, and so forth.

The state has offered services and budget money for I/DD Waiver services, none of which can be accessed without the ABA medically-necessary services my son once received and made progress during the limited time he had ABA coverage provided by Medicaid QI Health plan before ABA coverage ended for the sole reason of turning 21. No progress and decline would be likely for an individual with such needs and barriers.

I am not an attorney but know enough to know that my adult son should not be discriminated against due to his disability of autism and not have access to this state service of ABA through Medicaid (QI health plan).

Thank you for the opportunity to present some testimony that impacts daily some of your constituents and for your strong consideration.

Feb. 12, 2024