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To: Representative Higgins, Chair
Health & Social Services Standing Committee

From: Lea Anne McWhorter
Member, Governor's Task Force on Autism
Parent of Autistic Child

Subject: HB 36, Licensing of Behavior Analysts

As a member of the Governor's Task Force on Autism and as a parent of a child who experiences autism, I would like to offer support for passage of HB 361, Licensing of Behavior Analysts.

Research shows that early diagnosis of and intervention training for behavior are key to the successful futures of individuals who experience autism, and the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis are an avenue to provide the successful outcomes desired.

In Alaska, a small number of private providers offer research- and evidenced-based intervention options, using a multi-disciplinary approach, guided by the critical principles of Applied Behavior Analysis and overseen by Board Certified Behavioral Analyst. Such services include interventions that are intensive, involve families as active participants, provide well-trained staff, develop clear objectives, and consistently use data-driven evaluations of progress. They do so while also teaching generalization and maintenance of skills, and assisting with transitions to school or other community-based activities.

HB 361, Licensing of Behavior Analysts, will provide a means for families to be assured that the services they are seeking for their children will be delivered by a provider who is fully trained to implement the intervention methods of ABA. In addition, HB 361 will allow certified and licensed Behavior Analysts to be eligible to receive compensation from health insurance companies who offer coverage for ABA services in the treatment of autism, and thus create an opportunity to increase the number of much-needed ABA providers in Alaska.

I urge you to pass HB 361, Licensing of Behavior Analysts, in order to increase the opportunities for individuals experiencing autism to access the tools that can help lead them to full and productive futures.

Thank you for your consideration.
/s/ Lea Anne McWhorter