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Dear Rep. Bill Stoltze, Rep. Austerman and Members of the Finance Committee:

I am writing to you in support of HB 361, an act relating to the licensing of behavior analysts.

Licensing of Behavior Analysts does not have to be an expensive enterprise. Based on the budget prepared for Kentucky, the net costs to the state will be less than \$7,000 per year because they are relying on the BACB credentialing process rather than creating their own unique – and expensive process. If Alaska is able to keep even one person with autism or other developmental disabilities in state rather than requiring an expensive out-of-state placement the state will save far more money than this small sum. (A copy of this budget has been submitted with this testimony.)

As outlined in HB 361, licensing of BCBA's and BCaBA's would be tied directly to the BACB's educational and training requirements, test, and ongoing continuing education requirements. Applicants for licensure would complete an application form and criminal background check forms to be submitted with a fee to the state of Alaska. Alaska would then request confirmation from the BACB that the person is actively certified, await the results of the criminal background check, and handle the payments. Other than hearing grievances, the rest of the licensing process can be outsourced to the BACB at no cost to the state at all.

There are already 15 states that currently license behavior analysts, including North Dakota which has even fewer BCBA's than Alaska does (as of today, there are only 5 BCBA residing in that state), and at 7 other states including Connecticut are in the process of seeking licensure as well.

Most states have a higher fee for initial requests for licensure, and then a smaller annual fee. Initial fees can range from \$250 - \$500, and annual fees of \$150 - 350 are common fees in other states running similar programs.

Additionally, the state can expect to save a great deal of money over time by providing in-state intensive ABA program for people with autism and other disabilities. For example, a cost analysis study found that the state of Texas would save more than \$208,000 per student over the 18 years the children with significant

disabilities spend in special education settings. This does not even include the reduced cost of servicing these individuals after they age out of school (see Chasson, Harris & Neely, 2007 submitted with this testimony). Based on a cost analysis utilizing the residential costs for people in Connecticut the lifelong savings could be well over 3 million dollars per person (see Letso slide submitted with this testimony). A cost analysis conducted by Jacobson, Mulick and Green (abstract submitted with this testimony) found also found substantial lifelong cost savings.

Licensing of behavior analysts will go a long way toward protecting consumers of ABA services, including Alaska school districts that are already spending millions of dollars each year on these services. For years, both state and federal funds including military funding have been utilized to support ABA programming in Alaska, as well as families who privately fund ABA services for people with autism in the state. Just in the last few years alone, the Anchorage Public School System has spent several million dollars on behavior analytic services for children with autism. Without licensure this will remain an unregulated “cottage industry” with no consumer protections in place.

Licensure of behavior analysts is critical to the provision of ABA within the state of Alaska. This will facilitate implementation of the autism insurance bill enacted last year. It will also ensure that those providing ABA services are appropriately qualified, and have undergone a background check – including those who are not AK residents. It will enable Alaskan residences that have completed Alaskan-based university coursework to remain in Alaska rather than leaving the state because they cannot utilize their education and experience here. Perhaps most importantly, it will protect consumers of ABA services and will enable children with autism and other disabilities who are currently out of state to someday be able to return home.

This bill will have an immediate and long-term impact on the availability and quality of ABA services for people with autism in the state. But it will likely also benefit others in the state in the future because BCBA’s also work with an increasing variety of other populations including, but not limited to our aging population, our prison population, those with traumatic brain injury, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and in manufacturing facilities for example. As the number of BCBA’s in AK increase, at least some of these professionals may begin to expand their practice to help some of these other populations as well as people with autism. Which makes it even more critical that licensure of BCBA’s be established as soon as possible.

Yours truly,
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