



Boston Children's Hospital



Harvard Medical School

To Whom It May Concern:

I am here to express my support, and the full support of Dr. Nicole Baumer, Director of the Boston Children's Hospital Down syndrome program, for H1084/S617 – An Act Regarding Applied Behavioral Analysis Therapy. Unfortunately, Dr. Baumer could not attend today's hearing.

I am Angela Lombardo. I am the Senior Program Coordinator at Boston Children's Hospital Down Syndrome Program and have been working with patients and their families in this role for 22 years.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a behavioral intervention that involves breaking down complex skills into small steps and teaching those steps with frequent repetition and reinforcement. This teaching methodology enables children with intellectual disability and other learning differences to develop skills such as speaking, playing, making friends, dressing, feeding, and toileting. ABA is also the mainstay of treatment for managing challenging and unsafe behaviors, such as aggression and self-injury, and is often recommended by experts in neurology, developmental and behavioral pediatrics, child psychology, and special education.

The Boston Children's Hospital Down syndrome Program is one of the oldest and largest Down syndrome programs in the country. We follow more than 1500 patients with Down syndrome. I have personally seen the incredible role ABA therapy can play in enabling children with Down syndrome to thrive. Unfortunately, only a minority of children with Down syndrome can access in home ABA therapy, because insurance companies do not currently provide coverage for this valuable treatment. I have witnessed the devastation families experience as they struggle to navigate the complex system of insurance denials and appeals while seeking this transformative therapy for their children.

Dr. Baumer and I are greatly encouraged by the conclusions found in the Mandated Benefit Review completed earlier this year by the MA Center for Health Information and Analytics and we hope this will lead to a decision that will require Massachusetts insurers to cover the costs of this life-changing therapy. As noted in CHIA's report, ABA is a highly successful therapy for children with a single diagnosis of Down syndrome. And the report also stated that insurance coverage for ABA would have a minimal impact on insurance premiums. For our patients at Boston Children's Hospital and everyone who works in the Down syndrome program, this is the best outcome we could ever envision.

The passage of this bill will provide children with a single diagnosis of Down syndrome the legal right to insurance coverage for ABA therapy, a treatment known to improve learning and development that will enable individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their fullest potential and to be productive members of their community.

On behalf of Dr. Baumer and myself, I thank you for this opportunity to talk with you today and about important, life-saving legislation.

Sincerely,

Angela Lombardo

Senior Program Coordinator

Boston Children's Hospital Down Syndrome Program

