

I am unable to speak in person due to an out of town commitment that could not be rescheduled. I am speaking in support of HB 2395.

What my family has lived through the last two years could politely be described as “autism hell”. After unsuccessfully trying to piece together a behavioral therapy program with limited access to therapists and a moderate budget, our son was admitted to a state run Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) in October 2011. He was declared a “child in crisis”. This was an incredibly difficult time for our family. We desperately tried to find the help our son needed, but could not. Without an established means of reimbursement, i.e. health insurance, therapists are only able to work in an area of KS where there are enough families with autistic children that can pay their services “out of pocket”.

After 6 months of general treatment at the state PRTF - **costing taxpayers \$325** per day - our son was accepted to the Intensive Behavioral Supports (IBS) program, which is based on the principals of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy. The IBS program has saved our son. He is finally receiving the treatment he requires. The IBS program using ABA therapy has had tremendous success returning children to their homes rather than to permanent placement in state facilities. Our son has made significant progress in this program and continues to improve (data charts are included). Had he been able to access this therapy in Manhattan, he most likely would not have needed to be placed in a state facility **costing taxpayers more than \$100,000 per year**. We are hopeful that with continued improvement he will be able to return home in the near future. However, this won't be possible without the in home support of a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and a behavioral therapy team.

We have had to accept the fact that our son will always require assisted living, but with continued therapy he stands a chance of being able to lead a happy and hopefully productive life in a local group home, rather than far from his family in one of the very expensive large state run facilities.

We parents are doing our job – we are starting foundations to raise awareness and provide education. We are organizing summer camps and creating after school activities that meet the needs of our kids. We are participating in research studies to help scientists figure out what is causing this atrocious disorder. Now, we are asking that insurance companies fulfill their responsibility and cover the medically necessary and proven treatment our kids require. Please let us take care of our children! What if this were your child? Or, what if YOU were this child?

Passing HB 2395 is the fiscally sound.

Cheryl Richt