



ATAM – The Autism Treatment Association of Minnesota

March 24, 2023

**RE: Support HF 1604 / SF 1765
and HF 1626 / SF 1593**

Senator John Hoffman, Chair and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee
2111 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-4154

Dear Senator Hoffman,

We ask you to pass HF 1604 / SF 1765 and HF 1626 / SF 1593, to provide an emergency relief grant and to increase the reimbursement rate for EIDBI treatment for autism.

Autism providers statewide need immediate financial relief to ensure that children and families have timely access to early intervention for autism (EIDBI).

They suffered a sudden deep drop in their workforce during the great resignation of the winter of 2021-2022, and this severe loss in the workforce persists today.

This resulted in a total financial loss of \$20 million just to ATAM autism providers, which they now carry as a debt which is difficult to repair, because all of their funding is paid by a Fee-for-Service (they obviously can't bill for services that they can't deliver).

Due to historically low reimbursement rates, the margin for each billable service is too slight to repair that debt, and at the same time also recruit and retain new employees.

Some have already closed locations, and more are likely to close, under the weight of the resulting debt burden.

This hit our families hard. 2,603 children have lost access to EIDBI – a 60% drop in access to treatment. These are families who are losing their chance for early intervention. They have nowhere else to go for the treatment that their children need. They are back on the waiting lists.

The irony is that early intervention is expected to reduce long-term costs, which would ultimately bring back financial returns to the Medical Assistance program. EIDBI is Early Intensive Developmental Behavioral Intervention – A ground-breaking autism treatment program that was initiated by Governor Dayton in 2013. EIDBI is designed to provide the mentoring and support that disadvantaged workers need to enter this workforce.

Yet the current Fee-For-Service reimbursement rates are inhibiting the providers' ability to meet that promise.

Even as the providers struggle to get whole, the demand for autism services is still dramatically increasing. Every provider faces a waiting list of children that our workforce is too short to help. Our University of Minnesota Autism Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network now reports that there is one child with autism for every 36 eight-year-old Minnesotans (<https://addm.umn.edu>). Yet there is only one Certified Behavior Analyst available for every 97 children.

So we are asking the state of Minnesota to help us get to the other end by implementing an immediate emergency grant program and an immediate rate increase to restore a positive balance in our budgets, and build new compensation and support programs to recruit and retain the workforce.

Yours,

Eric V. Larsson, PhD, LP, BCBA-D, Minneapolis
President, Autism Treatment Association of Minnesota

The following are the sponsoring organizations of the Autism Treatment Association of Minnesota:

Accend Services
Autism Matters
Behavior Frontiers
Behavioral Dimensions

Caravel Autism Health
Holland Center
Lovaas Institute Midwest
Minnesota Autism Center

Rochester Center for Children
Solutions Behavioral Healthcare
Professionals
St. David's Child Development

Minnesota Northland Association for
Behavior Analysis
Minnesota Behavioral Specialists