

SF1765 WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Emergency grant program for autism spectrum disorder treatment providers

Senator Hoffman and members of the Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Autism Society of Minnesota, we are writing in support of SF1765. Part of AuSM's mission is ensuring that our laws and public policies support individuals and families living with autism. The current waiting lists for autism evaluations and Early Intensive Developmental/Behavioral Intervention (EIDBI) services is unacceptable, and our mission dictates that we speak out.

From the Department of Human Services: The purpose of the EIDBI Benefit is to provide medically necessary early intensive intervention for people with ASD and related conditions, as well as:

- Educate, train and support their parents and families
- Promote people's independence and participation in family, school and community life
- Improve long-term outcomes and the quality of life for people and their families.

None of the above goals are being met when families cannot access the benefit. Early intervention should be EARLY—we are years from providing help when parents realize that help is needed. The median age of diagnosis is over 5 years old while signs of autism can appear in infancy. And because of the workforce shortage and the pandemic, delays in diagnoses is becoming more common. Using data from 2020, MN-ADDM researchers found 1 in 53 (1.9%) 4-year-old children were identified with ASD. This is lower than the overall ADDM Network prevalence of 4-year-old children identified with ASD (1 in 46 or 2.2%) in the United States where the CDC tracked ASD in 2020. It is also lower than the MN prevalence of 4-year-old children identified with ASD in 2018 (1 in 44 or 2.3%).

Autism is a complex disability; children and families need to be connected to resources that will help the child grow in ways meaningful to that child and family. Autistic individuals diagnosed as adults have shared how traumatic their childhoods were without an early diagnosis and meaningful supports. Going without the necessary services and supports causes HARM that must be repaired in addition to delaying the services.

When Minnesota created the EIDBI benefit, we recognized the importance of an individualized approach and a variety of interventions to help support growth and development that facilitates inclusion in home, school and community. There is not individualization nor cultural and geographic considerations when families are forced to do without services or accept the first available opening that might be months or years away.

This legislation will provide funding to help providers to start serving those children who are currently sitting on waiting lists instead of getting the help promised with the development of EIDBI services.

Please support SF1765.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs
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