

Dear Estimated Elected officials.

My two sons who are on the spectrum have spent the majority of their life receiving ABA services. ABA therapy and the structure it provides is deeply rooted in my everyday life. ABA therapy has taught my sons how to function in a world designed to restrict their life. ABA has taught my children how to process their actions and how to step by step learn to navigate their surroundings. Before ABA therapy my children struggled with everyday tasks. As a parent I couldn't understand how they learned, how they processed things and how they retained new tasks. ABA is a bridge that helps my children connect to the outside world and helps guide me to support them.

I grew up in Minnesota and spent all my formative years in a world designed for neurotypical individuals, it wasn't til my son's diagnosis that I myself sought therapies for my neurodivergence. ABA services helped me connect with my own neurodivergence to understand how I can teach and support my kids.

Some folks have testified that ABA is somehow harmful or dangerous, I say that ABA has advanced my autistic children's ability to thrive, not just survive. To use one person's example that ABA is not effective is small minded and discriminatory. To abolish ABA centers is to take away vital curriculum out of the hands of Autistic kids who are needing these centers to teach them basic and advanced life skills.

There needs to be collaboration between DHS, parents and ABA centers to improve the quality of care and ethical practices. There needs to be accountability on ABA centers and DHS to ensure that children's needs are being met and exceeded. Abolishing ABA centers will send American Autistic children into a dark room filled with lost hopes, dreams and ambition. Improvements in any system must come from the guidance of the users and the support of the government. Parents of children like mine need to be heard and understood.

I strongly recommend that you put yourself in the shoes of your neighbors, friends and family. Everyone I know has an autistic child, everyone I know has an autistic niece, nephew, cousin, sibling, grandchild. Autism is here to stay and with it we need ABA centers. Let's work together to come up with a solution to a problem that is in every sector of society. Let's not rush into a solution that will in the long run cost families like mine their independence, advancement and education.

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Neurodivergent Parent
Advocate