

301

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY:
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My name is Melissa Sullivan and I have a 5 year old son with a diagnosis of PDD-NOS on the Autism Spectrum. We had a very early diagnosis at the age of 15 months and we have had intense treatment including ABA, RDI, speech therapy and OT since his diagnosis. It has been a constant struggle to provide my son with the things that he needs and we have had to be strong advocates to make sure that he has gotten these therapies in hopes that one day he will become a successful adult. Therapies like ABA were until recently funded for my son through the Department of Children and Family's(DCF) Voluntary Program. DCF has made very demanding changes to this voluntary program and are now "timing out" families after a short 6 months. The DCF home program was costing over a \$1000.00 per week for 10 hours of ABA and 1 hour of RDI. My son was making huge progress with his home program as well as attending 2 preschools. He is now left with no home services and I am left to fight yet another fight with our school system so that these programs can continue for him. We were forced to recently close out a college fund for our 7 year old daughter so that we could continue this program for our son. We have refinanced our house 3 times in the past 7 and a half years and are trying to refinance one last time right now to access the last of the equity in our home so that these crucial services can continue without interruption.

As a parent with a special needs child the daily demands are sometimes overwhelming and there is little support for families with children on the spectrum. Right now as I write this a child is being diagnosed with Autism and the current statistics say that the Autism rate is 1 in 150 children. Families need help and most of us pay very high insurance premiums which should include ABA and RDI in addition to the recently added speech, and OT therapies. These therapies have proven effective in helping children on the Autism spectrum and are research based and proven. I cannot urge everyone enough to fully support Senate Bill 301—there is nothing more important in making sure that all families are able to access treatments for their children.

Thank you for your time,
Melissa Sullivan