

Statement of Maria Dominici to the Public Health Committee re: SB 799

My name is Maria Dominici and I have a daughter with autism. Between the ages of 3 1/2 to 5 years, my daughter was treated by fraudulent behavior analyst Stacy Lore. My daughter is now 9 years old and still very impaired. She is non-verbal and cannot care for herself. I will never know what her capabilities may have been if she had spent that year and a half with an educated, certified behavior analyst.

An issue many people might not recognize is the importance of early intervention. With autism or any other developmental delay, early intervention is crucial while the brain is still young and forming and growing. When a proper behavior modification program is provided for children with autism during that critical "window" of learning time, then the percentage of success is much greater. And by success, I mean taking a child that may not have been able to learn or behave functionally and helping them to develop into an independent, functional individual. Applied behavior analysis is the only scientifically proven method that can take a child with autism and help them to learn on their own. And only certified behavior analysts are capable of treating our needy children. My daughter was not treated by someone that was capable or appropriate.

Let me please talk about the financial issue of autism. When a child becomes an adult and cannot care for him/herself, that adult needs to be cared for by our state. When you give a child with autism an appropriate treatment at a young age, when their window of opportunity to learn is so great, then you give that child an opportunity to live an independent life someday. And by doing so, the state is relieved of the burden to care for these children once they become adults. And that could be as much as 70 years of caring for just one person.

Punishing individuals that misrepresent themselves as behavior analysts, to the fullest extent of the law, is a necessity. In fact, it's criminal not to do so. We, as individuals who are capable of making change must do so for those who cannot do it for themselves. It is us who must create laws that protect those who are needy and so dependent upon the rest of us. If we ignore injustices that hurt our children and hurt them for their entire lives, then we are no better. Then we are guilty ourselves.