

I respectfully submit this document as my testimony regarding this issue named above. My name is Karen Simon, I have been an education advocate in the state for 15 years and am also a mother of a child with autism. I am extremely concerned with this section of HB5537 that allows SLP's to deliver ABA services to our kids, and am struggling with where this idea could have even emanated from as it is so beyond what would constitute safe practices for our children.

The part of the bill that allows speech and language therapists to deliver ABA services to children with autism is incredibly misguided and reckless with regard to the safety of our children. Applied Behavior Analysis or ABA is mind altering therapy that can cause immense damage to our children if done incorrectly.

Someone who obviously has no idea of what ABA is, how it is implemented, the kind of training that is required and how quickly things can go wrong must have been behind this effort.

It is troubling that parents involved with ABA programs, Behavior Analysts and Behavior Therapists were not consulted on this to gain an understanding of the science behind implementing ABA programs.

To me it is as bad as casually deciding to have a cardiac specialist perform brain surgery just because they are both doctors and work in hospitals.

Speech Therapy is important to our children and I applaud the dedicated SLP's in our schools, but they would tell you themselves that they do not have the skill set to administer ABA programs to our kids. More importantly, the SLP's current work load in every district is so stretched to the breaking point that I find this proposal almost laughable. Many districts report that they can't even find SLP's to handle all the kids requiring speech therapy let alone ABA. Behavioral therapy comes from a place of data driven analysis beginning with administering a baseline assessment, writing ABA programs addressing the deficits noted in the assessment and analyzing data taken on the child during the course of his day to determine the effectiveness of the programs. Also it tracks and analyzes the behavior of the child particularly what is getting in the way of his learning. Misunderstanding the data collection process and not knowing how to correctly interpret the data can cause regression in critical academic, social and behavioral areas and cause serious problems for the parent in the home and community environments.

This is my layman's attempt to explain the complexities of this therapy, I gladly defer to those experts that have studied the science of Behavioral Therapy and have years of administering successful ABA programs in this state such as The Institute of Professional Practice, The Center for Growth and Development, Ct. Center for Child Development, ACES, BDES and other BCBA's across the state.

I am speaking as a parent of a child that has an excellent ABA program, a highly skilled BCBA who worked side by side with the SLP, OT, PT and as a result is able to be fully included in his home school.

I know the importance of the professionals working with my child to each having an expertise in everyone of these critical areas for best outcome.

I am also speaking as an advocate to hundreds of children who can be doing so much better in all areas if we required MORE training and oversight in administering ABA programs and definitely not opening it up to inadequate supervision by overworked SLP's.

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