

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 28

BY SENATORS FOIL, BARROW, BOUDREAUX, CARTER, HENSGENS, LUNEAU
AND FRED MILLS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health and Louisiana commercial health insurance payors to increase reimbursement rates for autism therapy services.

WHEREAS, access to high-quality applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy services for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) furnished by private providers is essential for the health, safety, and well-being of those children; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, the legislature mandated that all health coverage plans in Louisiana, including Medicaid plans, include coverage for medically necessary ABA therapy for children with ASD; and

WHEREAS, reliable and sufficient Medicaid and commercial insurance reimbursement rates for private providers are necessary to create and maintain a sustainable statewide system of services for children with ASD; and

WHEREAS, research has consistently shown that early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of ASD is essential to ensuring that early intervention ABA therapy services have the most positive impact on the social, communicative, and behavioral skills of a child with ASD; and

WHEREAS, due to significant access barriers, families in Louisiana routinely may have to wait up to six to twelve months for a formal evaluation by a child psychologist or other clinician to obtain an ASD diagnosis and another six to twelve months to access ABA therapy services; and

WHEREAS, due to these long wait times, families in Louisiana often are not able to access medically necessary autism therapy services at the appropriate time, thus delaying their child's progress; and

WHEREAS, a delay in accessing services ultimately costs more money since these children often need more intensive therapy for a longer period of time than children who are able to access ABA therapy early on; and

WHEREAS, since inception of the Medicaid ABA therapy program in 2014, reimbursement rates for Medicaid ABA services have decreased by as much as twenty-four percent for some services, while the price of labor and prices for almost all goods and services have increased dramatically; and

WHEREAS, ABA therapy providers are limited by existing reimbursement rates when determining pay rates for individuals who deliver ABA therapy services and, across Louisiana, adequate staffing is a major barrier to families accessing ABA therapy services; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana Medicaid is one of only a few state Medicaid programs in the country to use a bifurcated rate structure that reimburses providers different amounts for delivery of the same ABA therapy service, based solely on the education level of the individual providing the service; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Medicaid reimbursement rate for ABA services delivered by a registered line technician without a college degree is in the lower twenty percent of all states nationwide; and

WHEREAS, numerous states are reviewing their reimbursement rates in light of current challenges to providing access to ABA therapy services; and

WHEREAS, providers of ABA therapy services for children with ASD are essential and the services they deliver for children with ASD are invaluable; and

WHEREAS, fair and equitable funding for ABA therapy providers that make up this state's autism services system is necessary in order to ensure that Louisiana children with ASD have access to medically necessary therapy services.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health and Louisiana commercial health insurance payors to increase reimbursement rates to reflect changes in the cost of providing ABA therapy services and to ensure adequate access to medically necessary therapy services for Louisiana children with ASD.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislature does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to make adjustments in the state Medicaid budget to allocate more fair and equitable funding for ABA therapy providers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and the executive director of the Louisiana Association of Health Plans.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES