

Mighty Oak ABA LLC., Portland OR

Honorable Representative Rob Nosse

Chair, House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

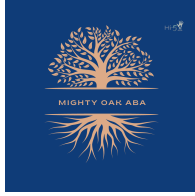
Dear Representative Nosse,

On behalf of Mighty Oak ABA, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 2023, which proposes to establish health insurance coverage for applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disability diagnoses, ensuring parity with coverage for autism spectrum disorder diagnoses. This legislation is crucial for expanding access to essential ABA services for a broader population in need.

Mighty Oak ABA is a small ABA company serving the east side of Portland, including areas that are lacking access to services. We support clients officially diagnosed with autism who also have dual diagnoses such as intellectual disability, ADD, ADHD, developmental delay, and speech delays. We serve clients in their preschools, homes, and in the community, as well as provide parent support and coaching, coordinating care with public school teams, and private clinicians such as SLPs and OTs. Our clients range in age from 2-22. Our technicians range in skill from new to the field to masters level technicians trying to gain supervision for their BCBA license.

Expanding coverage will improve access to care for individuals under the IDD umbrella. In the years that Mighty Oak ABA has existed, we have had to turn away clients in dire need of support for not having an official autism diagnosis, but having other diagnoses. Additionally, children's developmental windows for learning close as they sit in a holding pattern on evaluation waitlists for 9-18 months at a time. School supports are available under client IEPs, but supplementary in-home support is not adequately available and creates a challenging environment in the home and puts stress on the support at home and leaves family dynamics and its sustainability under duress. ABA clinicians witness firsthand the impact of individuals who do not have access to behavioral support; the barriers to independence include inability to regulate challenging behaviors in meaningful ways, inability to create and maintain healthy friendships and social connections, inability to learn daily adaptive and self-help routines, inability to communicate directly and appropriately, inability to generalize skills across environments, settings, contexts, people, and social situations.

ABA therapy is an extensive scientific framework that benefits all who use it and is not just exclusive for autism support. The framework of ABA supports behavior change and is impactful in its ability to be adapted and individualized to whom it is meant to serve. So while ABA will benefit individuals on an individual level by allowing them to gain more independence and autonomy of



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themselves and their lives, make social connections, and communicate and self-advocate more impactfully, there are many additional benefits. Accessibility to services will allow for more hands to make lighter work, and increase meaningful community and systemic support. School systems and other recommended, more incompatible services will not be as stressed and imposed upon to be effective. Families will be more supported, clients will be more successful in school and the community and other environments outside of the home where they spend a lot of time. There, in theory, would be some alleviated burnout in the professional circles with more collaboration and coordination of care. Parties can work smarter not harder.

We at Mighty Oak have been fortunate to witness first hand the impact of ABA support on our clients and families. When initially asked what their hopes and goals are for their children, parents and caregivers often express their worry for their child's safety and future; they want them to be happy, and some families just want to be able to do something as simple as go to a restaurant and share a meal together without the judging and critical eyes of others, and to feel some semblance of what they would call "normalcy" and stability, as their day to days are often unpredictable, chaotic, and stressful and disproportional to good ones. We have watched young children to teens talk, use a toilet independently, make friends, engage and interact fondly with their parents, tie their own shoelaces and brush their own teeth, all for the first time. We have watched parents go from stressed, worried about uncertain futures, and burnt out, to confident, hopeful, and able to manage in their own homes- not feeling alone and feeling supported. The impact of ethically imparted, trauma informed, high quality ABA services are astoundingly successful.

HB 2023 is a necessary step toward equitable access to evidence-based therapies for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We respectfully urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 2023.

Thank you for your time and service to the state of Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nirvana Kowlessar-Hirshkleyer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Nirvana Kowlessar

Owner/Clinical Director

Mighty Oak ABA LLC

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