

Letter in Support of SB09-244

March . . .

Dear Members of the Colorado Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

The Crescent Grange #136 of Broomfield would like to express its support of Senate Bill 09-244.

As a subordinate, local member of the nation's oldest national agricultural organization, The Crescent Grange endeavors to continue the more than 135 years of support, education, and legislative advocacy for families in the rural, urban, and suburban communities of which we are a part. Throughout the years and across the nation, the Grange has promoted cooperation and collaboration, so that all have an equal and fair voice in those issues that affect them.

We believe Autism is a condition that affects all communities in Colorado, from the quiet towns in Colorado's farmlands to the bustling lofts of Downtown Denver. We see that Autism is no respecter of the wealthy or the poor, and that all races and ethnicities are being touched. Children, adolescents, and adults alike experience the effects of Autism every day, every place they live.

No one can argue that the number of those directly affected by Autism is on the rise, with no indication that the trend is decreasing. That means even more children will be diagnosed this year than last, and those already diagnosed are quickly becoming adolescents and adults *who are still affected* and in need of services. This size and needs of these groups are not going away or even leveling off, but is instead growing in severity and intensity.

This "tsunami" of needs has already hit our Early Interventions programs and our school systems, who are already reeling from the decrease in funding from the recent economic situation. Within a decade, the first wave will enter adulthood, and will require services that, at the current rate, already challenge our state financially.

Statewide problems require statewide solutions. No single group bears the responsibility for combating Autism alone, and therefore no one group can be allowed to shirk its duty and role in this battle.

The Crescent Grange sees SB09-244 as one of many necessary directions from which these issues must be attacked. This bill, among other things, requires insurance companies to provide their members across the state those services that have a proven track record in remediating aspects of Autism.

Expanding an individual's access to the services already available in his or her area—such as Occupational and Speech Therapies—saves time and money typically spent to create new infrastructure. Using existing systems of care allows those in remote and under-served areas access to those services in a timely and effective manner.

Expanding services to include behavior therapy not only allows affected individuals access to a treatment with decades of effective treatment *in every environment possible*, but provides many families with their very own "stimulus package", allowing much-needed financial resources to be redirected to other uses.

While SB09-244 will not solve all the state's problems, we of the Crescent Grange believe it to be a prudent and forward-thinking act that will provide both short-term and long-term relief to families and communities statewide. We believe that not only the Broomfield area, which we specifically serve, but the State of Colorado as a whole, will benefit from this legislation. Thank you for this opportunity.