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Good afternoon. My name is Kristen Kaiser, and I am an Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at JFK Partners, at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. My work focuses on developing and studying support programming for families of children with autism. I am in contact with many families with a new diagnosis of autism struggling desperately to find a way to access resources for intervention for their children.

I am also the mother of 11-year old triplets, Graham, Cora and Hayden. When our children were 3 years old, all of them were diagnosed with autism. The weight of this responsibility was crushing for our family. We worried for their future, but had to focus on intervention that would teach them to talk, toilet train, play, and function in a preschool setting. Each child had their own strengths and challenges, and each needed different strategies to accomplish these goals. We were overwhelmed and terrified at the prospect of how to access enough intervention to serve the whole family. It is a terrible feeling to know that you may be able to impact your child's outcome, but not have access to that care financially.

Our three children were in the first 75 children in the state to receive the Children With Autism Waiver. We had this funding and care coordination for 2 ½ years. This waiver provided us with behavioral in-home therapy four days a week with an interdisciplinary team. We also had site-based occupational therapy and social skills groups. Most importantly, we had a sustained amount of parent training with our in-home behavioral intervention. As parents, we were able to implement strategies, work as collaborators with our intervention team, and receive coaching on our interactions with the children to maximize their opportunities to practice new skills.

The services we were able to access for our family on the CWA waiver changed the trajectory of our lives. Those skills we acquired have carried forward, and for our children, the outcome of their autism diagnosis was forever changed. Only one of our children still has the diagnosis of autism, and his challenges are mild. While we still struggle with common co-occurring challenges such as anxiety, Tourettes and ADHD, our family is thriving. Our children are funny, sweet, affectionate, curious and interested in the world. This was not our reality before we received intervention. While this outcome is not a guarantee for all families, I can tell you that without the CWA waiver, we would not be where we are today.

What our family experienced was a privilege, but we can we can make it a possibility for all families. I support this bill, on behalf of all the families in Colorado currently bending under the terrible weight of the responsibility they feel to help their child have the best future possible.

Thank you for you time.