

Testimony for Bill SB09-244

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Our beautiful son Aidan was born May 17, 2006. He was different than any other baby I knew, and when he did not hit his developmental milestones, such as sitting up or walking, we went to Children's Hospital for an evaluation. He received his official diagnosis of autism on January 23, 2008.

We were (are) devastated, but immediately went out to find the 20-25 hours a week of behavioral therapy the doctors recommended. They stated that without intensive therapy, Aidan is "at risk for mental retardation. "

Aidan is currently receiving Behavioral Therapy five times a week, Speech Therapy twice a week, OT once a week and PT once a week. Insurance will not cover the cognitive therapy that the doctor recommended at his one-year post exam January 2009, and we are still working on how we can pay for it ourselves. I work at night and my husband works during the day in order to keep up with the therapy.

Without the recommended cognitive therapy, we are currently paying \$600.00 a week in therapy alone. This amount will increase in May when we add PT and the OT that is currently covered through Developmental Pathways. Although Aidan is non-verbal at 3 years of age, insurance will only pay for 20 speech sessions (10 weeks) per year. This figure does not include the money we pay for the 11 different (Developmental Pediatrician, DAN Doctor, Behavioral Psychologist, Geneticist, Orthopedist, Pediatric Dermatologist, Cardiologist, Neurologist, Pediatric Ophthalmologist, Gastroenterologist, Endocrinologist) specialists we will see each year. We also pay for the majority of the lab work, testing and treatments these specialists deem medically necessary.

It was prophetic at the time, but we also took out a \$38,000 home equity loan soon after the diagnosis; "just in case" we might need it. That loan was exhausted last month. We have withdrawn \$20,000 from our 401K just to buy us more time.

My husband and I have decided that we are going to go down swinging and continue on with what our son needs. We have resigned to the fact that we more than likely will have to sell our home, or if all else fails, foreclose on it. We will also probably need to declare bankruptcy sometime in the future once we start putting the doctor recommended therapy on credit cards. We are not irresponsible people and have always taken pride in our finances. When we started we had a credit score in the low 800's, a year later it is in the lower 700's as we struggle to do everything we can to help our son.

In passing this bill, you will stop this discrimination against our son simply because he has been diagnosed with autism. We have seen wonderful improvements with the therapy he has received. He will be entering an integrated pre-school this August. This would not have been possible without the therapy he has received.

In passing this bill, you will give my son Aidan, and all of those affected by autism, the fighting chance they deserve.

Thank you,

Adrienne Paradis