



autism speaks®

February 4, 2025

TO: Honorable Members of the Legislature

RE: Opposition to proposed Medicaid ABA cuts in Governor Hochul's budget

I write today on behalf of Autism Speaks, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating an inclusive world for all individuals with autism throughout their lifespan. We do this through advocacy, services, supports, research and innovation, and advances in care for autistic individuals and their families.

We are deeply concerned about a proposed cut in Governor Hochul's budget, which would reduce Medicaid spending for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services by \$9.6 million this year and \$19 million in 2026. We urge you to reject this cut, as it would lead to a direct reduction in life-changing services that support children and adults with autism.

As you may know, ABA is widely recognized as the gold standard of behavioral therapy care for individuals with autism. Although commercial insurance has covered ABA in New York since 2012, Medicaid has only covered it since 2021. Due to implementation delays, Licensed Behavior Analysts (LBAs) did not sign up to become providers in the program until 2023. A cut to this program would be devastating to New York families who have waited years to access it. In addition to greatly improving quality of life, communication and self-care skills, for many patients ABA therapy directly contributes to their ability to complete an education and be employable.

Following is a quote from Governor Hochul about her proposed increases to OPWDD, which we strongly support: "New York's service providers are providing a critical service to people with developmental disabilities and their families, and they deserve to be paid a fair rate for the services they deliver. This rate adjustment is expected to enable a majority of service providers to increase pay to their frontline staff, which would make living in New York more affordable for one of our hardest working, most dedicated and compassionate workforces." It is very important that we don't harm another portion of the autism/developmental disability service workforce while appropriately helping this portion, because they all serve individuals and families in great need.

Please reject the proposed cuts for ABA services. Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Kelly Headrick*

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