

Minnesota House of Representatives
Human Services Finance Committee
Chair – Rep. Noor
March 7th, 2023

Re: HF 1626 – The timing is wrong since DHS/Governor have a rate study proposal in their budget

Dear Mr. Chair and Members, many thanks for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Idil Abdull, I am a Somali Autism Mom and a pissed-off advocate who would like to retire soon.

HF 1626 is asking for a rate increase for EIDBI. This is for autism therapy providers. I want to let you know that autism is extremely high in children born in Minnesota to Somali parents according to research done by Gov Pawlenty's health department in 2009 and UMN in 2013.

Additionally, I want the record to state that Early Intensive Developmental & Behavior Intervention passed the state legislature around midnight on Thursday, May 16, 2013. I know because I was the only person of color advocating for this bill at that time. It was Somali autism parents and the Somali community that solely advocated and fought tooth and nail to ensure Medicaid covered autism therapy.

Fast forward to today, 2.21.23, there are more minority children particularly Somalis being served under EIDBI and more Somali EIDBI providers than any other ethnicity including non-minority providers who were initially against EIDBI.

Here are my concerns:

1. Given this dark and long-fought history in getting EIDBI to pass both in Minnesota and in CMS which was no day at the park, why were there not more Somali and other minority EIDBI providers at the table when this was being written?
2. What is the cost, and what does DHS shall develop a rate framework mean?
3. How will this work with **DHS' rate study proposal?** The last time we proposed the current rate for EIDBI, there were multiple stakeholder meetings; DHS got data from other states to compare rates and services. This bill feels rushed and hasty.
4. Who will be at the table for this development that is mentioned in this bill?
5. Will this rate adjustment include increasing the reimbursement rate for BCBAs since they are charging Somali providers and other small EIDBI agencies anywhere between \$300 to \$1000 for an hour for level one therapists. DHS reimburses level one \$70 to \$82.00 per hour.
6. How can the fee be more than the reimbursement?
7. Why is the author rushing with this bill when DHS and the governor's office have put forth in their budget a rate and licensure study? This will ensure enough autism parents are included along with adequate minority EIDBI providers.
8. I believe increasing BCBAs particularly minority ones would be money well spent instead of this legislation. There is a chronic shortage of behavior analysts in Minnesota.

Finally, while I thank the author for bringing any autism legislation, I wish more folks from our community were asked to be involved particularly Somali autism parents.

It is not lost on me that the chair of this committee and the author reflect our community. I am disappointed most Somali autism parents were not at the table for this legislation. If the goal is always person-centered and culturally responsive manner, then the very least we expect from legislators who reflect us is simply to practice what they preach.

Racial disparity cannot survive and thrive when folks in power reflect minority communities. In Somalia, we call that “**Lax Bacaad Lagu Lisay**”.

Thanks for your time.

[When EIDBI was approved by CMS.](#)

Sincerely,

Idil Abdull – Somali Autism Mom