

March 3, 2023

Representative Peter Fischer
MN Human Services Policy Committee Chair
551 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Fischer and the MN Human Services Policy Committee,

My name is Chad Peel and I live in District 48A. I'm writing in support of HF 1604 Emergency funding bill for Autism services and behavior therapy under the EIDBI program.

My wife Heidi and I are parents of Isaac, our 19-year-old son who is on the low-functioning/severe end of the autism spectrum. Our family have been receiving services from the non-profit provider Minnesota Autism Center (MAC) since Isaac was three.

Ever since the beginning of the pandemic, it has been a massive struggle for both MAC and the families of these children with autism due to significant staffing shortages.

Isaac is 6' and 300+ pounds. Over the past several years, he has been violent towards family members and engages in significant property destruction. Through the therapy that Isaac receives at MAC, we've been able to bring his violence and property destruction down, and most of his physical violence is now limited to me – but it continues as a factor we need to deal with. I've been bitten well over a thousand times in the past few years as well as hit repeatedly on a daily basis. His daily therapy sessions at MAC were and are critical to keeping him in a situation where he can continue to live in our home.

Over the past two+ years, MAC has been cancelling 40% of our shifts each week due to staffing shortages. This disruption has caused a regression in Isaac's behavior because of the drop in therapy services that he receives from MAC. It's also put a massive burden on my job as I have to cancel my work and drop critical deadlines at a moments notice to be able to be at home with Isaac and protecting my family.

As a parent, it's tough to decide what the right thing to do with Isaac is for both him and our family. But my wife and I feel like the best option for now is to keep him in our home vs looking at other long-term living options. Services delivered for Isaac under EIDBI allow us to provide for him and our other children in a way that we feel is best for him (and for our community).

I'm more than happy to provide the committee any additional information as you consider these budgetary decisions and choices. Thank you for your service to our communities and families like ours and especially kids like Isaac. I am very grateful for your support of HF 1604.

Thank you,

Chad Peel
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