



AN ACT ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO MEDICAL TREATMENTS ESSENTIAL FOR PEOPLE WITH A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY, INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, OR AUTISM

H.1351 / S.871, filed by Rep. Barber and Sen. Keenan

This bill will require MassHealth to cover medically-essential treatments, including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services, for adults over the age of 21 with a developmental disability, intellectual disability, or autism. The bill also improves access to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) coverage.

CONTEXT

- MassHealth covers ABA for children and young adults with autism until they turn 21. But after that, they lose access to this care, even though their needs do not change.
- Private insurance often covers ABA into adulthood. But for those on MassHealth, they lose access--a massive inequality that disproportionately impacts lower income families.
- ABA is one of the most effective treatments for people with autism and other intellectual disabilities. It allows them to learn to communicate, to care for themselves, and to keep themselves and others safe.
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is another critical tool for those with IDD. AAC includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. AAC devices are beneficial in behavior therapy, as they allow individuals to express emotion and understand how to adjust their behavior to improve their overall health.

THE BILL

- Extends MassHealth coverage for habilitative and rehabilitative medically-necessary treatments, including ABA services, for individuals aged 21 and older who have a developmental disability, an intellectual disability, or autism spectrum disorder
- Instructs MassHealth to cover the cost of AAC devices, including, but not limited to, medically-necessary tablets.

THE IMPACT

Providing ABA treatments and AAC devices for individuals with I-DD over the age of 21, who may struggle from a wide range of lifelong behavioral challenges, ensures they can live a healthier, safer and more inclusive life.

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