

TO: Robert G. (Bob) Bethell Joint Committee on Home and Community-Based Services and KanCare Oversight

FROM: Michael Quinn, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer, Autism Support Now

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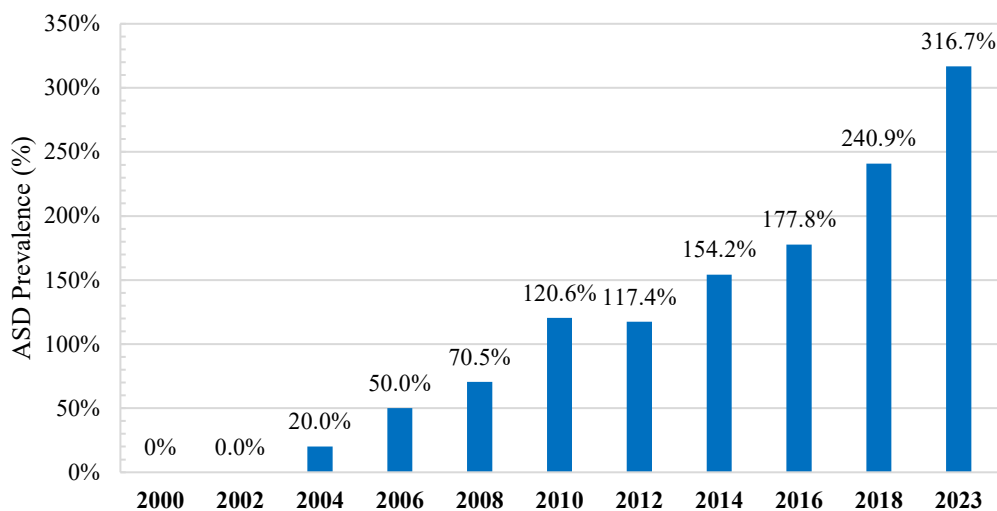
RE: Testimony

Chairwoman Landwehr, Vice-Chair Gossage, and members of the Robert G. (Bob) Bethell Joint Committee on Home and Community-Based Services and KanCare Oversight, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you written testimony.

Autism Support Now (ASN) operates eight autism pediatric clinics across Missouri and one in Olathe, Kansas, specializing in applied behavior analysis (ABA) treatment for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ABA is a scientifically supported model of treatment to remediate the functional impairments typically found in children with ASD. While approaches for ASD treatment may vary, ABA is the most common treatment due to abundant evidence of efficacy. Over 60% of the children and families we serve are Medicaid eligible. ASN was founded by Hope McPheeters, the mother of two children on the spectrum. Hope remains an active and engaged board member and colleague at ASN. Recently, our organization became a member of the KanCare Advocacy Network (KAN). We are excited to work with KAN and collaborate with more than 50 organizations and individuals who advocate on behalf of Kansans who depend upon Kansas Medicaid.

In the United States, according to the latest available research, ASD is one of the most prevalent developmental disabilities, affecting an estimated 1 in 36 children (approximately 4% of boys and 1% of girls). These figures impact children across all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention first began tracking the disorder in 2000, ASD prevalence in children has risen by 316.7% (Figure 1). Consequently, the rise in ASD prevalence has highlighted the need for additional investment in services particularly in underserved communities (e.g., Medicaid eligible children and families).

Figure 1: Annual Change in ASD Prevalence Rate from 2000



Recently, our organization hosted a roundtable discussion on barriers to accessing ABA treatment for children with ASD. We brought together providers, payors, and other key stakeholders to find solutions that will improve access to essential services for those in need. In Kansas, the three managed care organizations who provide services to Medicaid consumers in the KanCare program were present: *Aetna Better Health of Kansas*, *Sunflower Health Plan*,

and *UnitedHealthcare*. In addition, we had representatives from Elevance Health, Evernorth Health Services, MO HealthNet Division (Missouri Medicaid), Easterseals Midwest and the Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training. The representation, commitment, and engagement of those from Kansas was impressive. During the event, we identified a multitude of barriers preventing providers from delivering and expanding services in Kansas. For example, low Medicaid rates were one of the biggest barriers cited by stakeholders.

ASN's experience of engaging with the State of Kansas, policy makers and other key stakeholders on the topic of autism has been and continues to be extremely positive. Recently, we reviewed the 2021 Autism Task Team Report submitted to the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. While a great deal of progress has been made, there is clearly more work to be done. ASN is available to support any future initiatives in this space.

In Kansas, ASN has struggled but recently our Olathe Clinic has had a surge in clients, and we expanded our footprint at that Clinic, and we are very nearly operating in "the black." That clinic has stayed open, due to the success of our Missouri clinics. One of our strategic goals is to expand access to services in Kansas. Yet, because of current Kansas Medicaid rates for ABA treatment, such a move is not feasible currently. Table 1 illustrates ABA Medicaid rates across multiple Midwest states including Kansas. Of the seven states examined, the Medicaid rate for the State of Kansas is the lowest. Consequently, providers are not incentivized to enter the Kansas market and expand medically necessary treatment to children and families affected by ASD.

Table 1: Hourly Medicaid Reimbursement Rates for ABA Treatment (CPT Code: 97153)

Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	Oklahoma
\$52.00	\$68.00	\$65.36	\$47.00	\$60.00*	\$140.24	\$69.40

Source: Various State Medicaid Departments

*Upon his signature, effective July 1, 2024, Missouri Governor, Mike Parson, will introduce a new rate of \$65.48 per hour for ABA therapy. As a result of this policy change, our organization and others are incentivized to expand access to early intervention services to children and families impacted by autism. This is significant because it is well known that children with ASD who receive early intervention are more likely to have long-term positive outcomes. Currently, the State of Kansas is at a disadvantage in their bid to expand ABA treatment because of the economics. Having a competitive rate for ABA treatment lends itself to additional providers entering the market and responding to the growing needs of children and families impacted by autism.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

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