

# Re: HB26-1425 – Oppose or Amend “Applied Behavior Analysis Services”

Honorable Members of the Committee:

I respectfully ask you to oppose or amend HB26-1425 before moving it forward.

As a caregiver who has spent hundreds of hours in ABA, I am concerned that this bill gives legitimacy to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), a field that primarily focuses on controlling autistic behavior instead of understanding the underlying reasons behind the individual's distress.

The core principles of ABA aim to increase behaviors that adults or providers want to see and reduce behaviors they do not. Many autistic adults report that ABA is not helpful and, in many cases, causes harm. In a recent survey of thousands of autistic adults, more than 90% described ABA as unhelpful or harmful. They report that it taught them to hide distress, ignore their own boundaries, and perform compliance to avoid punishment or disapproval.

Autistic adults often compare ABA to gay conversion therapy, because the goal is often to make autistics appear less autistic, rather than helping them live safely and comfortably as themselves. In fact, both practices were developed by the same founder.

ABA relies heavily on operant conditioning and behavior control, practices which raise serious ethical concerns. Research also supports these concerns. A research study in 2018 found that autistics exposed to ABA showed significantly higher rates of C-PTSD symptoms. I urge the Committee to take both lived experience and research findings seriously.

If the Committee chooses to move forward with this bill, I respectfully urge the following **amendments**:

1. **Remove references to ABA as a therapy**, including in Section 1 and subsection 26-6-903. ABA is behavior modification, not mental health treatment, and ABA providers do not have training as therapists.
2. In subsection 12-247-104, replace at least one behavior analyst on the Board with a **licensed mental health professional**, such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychotherapist with trauma education, who can bring a mental health perspective to board decisions.
3. In subsection 12-247-104, replace at least one behavior analyst on the Board with an **autistic adult who provides lived experience** and direct insight into the impact of these practices.
4. **Coercive practices** such as extinction, planned ignoring, forced compliance, and escape extinction should be **explicitly listed as grounds for discipline** under subsection 12-247-115 and should not be accepted as standard practice.

5. Restraint and seclusion are commonly used in ABA. ABA practitioners often teach parents restraint holds. ABA practitioners – some who practice after only 40 hours of instructional training – **do not have the training or qualifications to teach restraint and seclusion** to caregivers. ABA practitioners **must be held to the same training and reporting requirements** as Colorado schools and hospitals, and teaching restraint or seclusion should be **grounds for discipline** under subsection 12-247-115.
6. **Remove the reference to ABA as “based on scientific research.”** Much of the research supporting ABA focuses only on short-term behavioral outcomes and does not examine long-term harm. Additional studies have also raised concerns about circular reasoning and conflicts of interest in ABA research.

This bill will have lasting consequences for autistics for decades. Please do not rush moving this bill forward without consideration of its impacts. I respectfully urge you not expand this system without strong protections, independent oversight, and meaningful representation from the autistic people most often harmed by these practices.

In future bills, I encourage representatives to give equal funding consideration for non-ABA supports, including communication supports, respite, occupational therapies, mental health therapies, and other supports that encourage person-centered care.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jenny Thamer

**House Health & Human Services**

**04/29/2026**

**HB26-1425 Applied Behavior Analysis Services**

**Typed Text of Testimony Submitted**

<b>Name, Position, Representing</b>	<b>Typed Text of Testimony</b>
Lindsey Walker  Against  themselves	<p>Good Afternoon,</p> <p>I am both a neurodivergent adult, and the mother and primary caregiver to my multiply disabled Autistic eleven year old son. I am writing to you today in request that you reconsider the impacts of the bill concerning the regulation of Applied Behavior Analysis services. I stand not in favor of this bill.</p> <p>Ostensibly, one can imagine why regulation of ABA would seem inherently beneficial, if not urgent, given the pervasive use across the state of Colorado. Colorado remains one of just eleven states that does not provide regulatory oversight and licensing of ABA and its practitioners (BCBA's). However, this bill as it is written risks legitimizing a practice that is so dangerous, and risks so much harm to Autistic children that, were it a medication, ABA would come with a black box warning. ABA is designed to enforce Autistic masking, which has been linked to increased Autistic suicidality, reduced quality of life for Autistic people, and reduced self-esteem. A recent and comprehensive study by the Department of Defense found limited to no impact on Autistic behavior, raising questions of its claims to effectiveness and ABA as an "evidence-based" approach. It is difficult to distinguish the harm ABA poses to Autistic children, until you are witnessing the harm firsthand in your own home, while trying to navigate meeting the needs of a complex disabled child and watching quality of life and mental health worsen due to exposure to ABA practices.</p> <p>I would urge anybody seeking to do the right thing for the Autistic community as it relates to this bill to educate themselves thoroughly before pressing forward on this topic. ABA, like the term Asperger's, was created by a Nazi whose Nazi ideology informed their "scientific" approach to Autistic individuals. Without understanding the history of Autism, and how ABA came to be considered a "therapy", it is impossible to make recommendations and legislative tools to support the Autistic community on this subject. It should be noted, the term</p>

	<p>Asperger's is no longer in use due to the historical context. ABA however, remains pervasive.</p> <p>Anderson L. K. (2023). Autistic experiences of applied behavior analysis. <i>Autism : the international journal of research and practice</i>, 27(3), 737-750. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221118216">https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221118216</a></p> <p>Aguirre Mtanous, N.G., Koenig, J., Bishop, L., et al. Applied behavior analysis and mental health outcomes in autistic youth. <i>Autism</i>. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613251390604">https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613251390604</a></p>
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**04/29/2026 01:30 PM**

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