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To whom it may concern,

I appreciate being able to testify on this critical bill allowing BCBA's to provide support in schools as a medical necessity.

I have been a Colorado resident since 2017 and live in Denver.

I am the parent of a son with autism and have been through many IEP processes with various school districts. As my son's mother and I came to understand the IEP process, we were often lost as to what agendas were being pursued, didn't understand the implications of either our role or the decisions being made on behalf of our son, nor did we understand our rights.

Parents, especially early in their introduction to the IEP process — need support. They face a daunting array of medical issues, legal issues, politics and agendas among district administrators, dizzying information at times obfuscated to help the district reduce costs, and no true consensus on how best to serve the needs of the student. IEP programs rely entirely on the ethics and competence — neither of which can be perfectly assured — of school professionals.

Parents — and school districts both — need help.

My son's mother and I opted, early in our participation in the IEP process, to not hire an attorney and press the school district for services that we believed were our due. Instead, we hired third party psychologists and doctors to help their counterparts within the school system diagnose and determine IEP goals and services for our son. We further supplemented the services we received from the school district with private services for which we paid.

I felt it important that we not consume budget from the school district in legal battles that should otherwise be going to students' benefit.

BCBA's can serve as professional advocates for parents and children, collaborate with school professionals in crafting and executing services, and speak the language of psychology and care for persons with disabilities.

By allowing doctors and insurance carriers to prescribe and provide services, the rights of children with disabilities will be served. As a medical necessity, IEP programs will be complimented and reinforced.

Not everyone can afford the kind of approach my son's mother and I pursued. For families of low income, they are all the more at the mercy of school district policy and practice. While they do have rights, and it's incumbent on them to understand those rights, let's face it: the deck is stacked entirely against them and their kids.