



## **Organizations Seek Licensure Requirements to Protect Children and Adults with Autism**

The New Jersey Association for Behavior Analysis (NJABA) and Autism New Jersey are pleased to announce their strong endorsement of new legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-37), Senate Minority Leader Thomas Kean (R-21) and Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker (D-16) titled, “Behavior Analyst Licensing Act.” The bill will, for the first time, require licensure for behavior analysts in New Jersey and thus provide the needed protections for the vulnerable populations who they serve.

With the highest autism prevalence in the country (1 in 34) and thousands of families desperate to find treatment for their loved ones, the demand for ABA services in New Jersey far exceeds the available supply of qualified and competent behavior analysts. Such a combination of high demand and low supply creates a fertile environment for untrained professionals to capitalize on this need. Without the protections afforded by this bill, such individuals are free today to falsely portray to unsuspecting families that they can provide ABA expertise. As this demand increases, sole dependence on a national and voluntary board certification process is no longer adequate to protect consumers or prohibit abuses by under- and untrained professionals.

“A majority of other states, 30 in all, have already taken this critically-important step to require licensure for those providing ABA services. With this important bill, New Jersey will be the next,” said Suzanne Buchanan, Psy.D., BCBA-D, Executive Director of Autism New Jersey. “A licensure law for behavior analysts would provide the state with the legal authority to protect consumers, employers, and state agencies from individuals who make false claims regarding the necessary competence or whose practice is not consistent with the profession’s ethical and disciplinary standards.”

NJABA and Autism New Jersey commend Senator Weinberg, Senator Kean and Assemblyman Zwicker for recognizing the challenges and risks that families face every day and introducing this legislation to establish licensing requirements to protect vulnerable individuals.

“Individuals with autism and their families deserve the highest quality of care,” said Senator Weinberg. “This bill will ensure individuals with autism will be treated by professionals who have met appropriate standards. This is a win for families and a sign of New Jersey’s ongoing commitment to quality healthcare.”

"The families of individuals with autism often face significant challenges in finding qualified service providers they can trust," said Senator Kean. "This legislation will provide the assurance that the behavior analysts treating their loved ones have met the high standards required for licensure."

“Families of individuals with autism simply want the best care for their loved one from professionals who have received proper training,” said Assemblyman Zwicker. “This legislation ensures that behavior analysts have the experience to provide the highest-quality care and have met the requirements for licensure.”

“Well-trained behavior analysts offer highly specialized and effective services that improve individuals’ lives,” said Sandra Gomes, Ph.D., BCBA-D, President of NJABA. For example, behavior analysts have taught thousands of children and adults with autism communication, social, and life skills.

MaryLouise Kerwin, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Director of the Center for Behavior Analysis at Rowan University said, “Given the tremendous unmet treatment needs of individuals with autism, licensure is critical to provide consumers with an accountability mechanism and develop the workforce of behavior analysts needed across the state.”

These bills were introduced in the Senate ([S3099](#)) and Assembly ([A4608](#)) on October 15, 2018 and have been referred to the Commerce and Regulated Professions Committees, respectively, for consideration.

For more information, visit <https://njaba.org/licensure>.