Senator Robyn Kennedy, Chair September 9, 2025

Representative Jay Livingstone, Chair

Senator Liz Miranda, Vice Chair

Representative Judith Garcia, Vice Chair

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Massachusetts State House

Boston, MA 02133

**RE: H.242/S.149*,* An Act to Enhance Standards of Care for Those with Autism and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.**

To the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities,

My name is Cynthia Laine, and I am a member of the Massachusetts Developmental Disability Council, where our mission is to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion. I am also the mother of two brilliant children with autism and the Executive Director of the Black Autism Coalition, a nonprofit organization that supports families of children with autism and other developmental disabilities across Massachusetts. I come before you today not only as an advocate, but as a parent who has experienced the challenges of navigating a system that too often leaves families without the guidance and care they need.

Families like mine encounter providers who want to help but are not adequately trained in recognizing or addressing the unique needs of children with autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities. We have sat in emergency rooms for hours with providers who did not understand how to calm or support a child with sensory sensitivities. We have experienced delayed diagnoses, misinterpretation of behaviors, and limited communication support during routine medical visits. These gaps are not about intent they are about training, standards, and accountability.

This legislation is an essential step forward. By requiring an integrated state plan for training and standards of care, you are helping to ensure that all healthcare providers—not just specialists—are equipped to support patients with autism and IDD. Continuing education requirements will improve early detection, ensure more accurate diagnoses, and provide families with the guidance they need to secure services before years are lost. Most importantly, it will help reduce the trauma that many individuals and families experience when they seek care in systems that are not prepared to serve them.

At the Black Autism Coalition, we see every day how disparities in access and quality of care impact families. Parents tell us they feel dismissed, misunderstood, or pressured into decisions without clear explanations. We work to build confidence and advocacy skills, but the responsibility should not rest solely on families. Providers need the tools, education, and statewide standards to deliver equitable, compassionate, and effective care.

This legislation is important as it’s a step to making Massachusetts a leader in setting standards of care for people with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities. This bill will not only improve medical care but also restore trust, reduce health disparities, and create a more inclusive healthcare system.

On behalf of my family and the families we serve, thank you for considering this issue. We are counting on your leadership to make sure no patient is left behind because a provider lacked the training or resources to care for them.

Respectfully,

**Cynthia Laine**  
Executive Director, Black Autism Coalition