

On behalf of the Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorder, we are writing to express our strong support for AB 169, which mandates coverage for habilitative and rehabilitative speech-language pathology services for individuals under 18 years of age who experience stuttering. This legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring that young people receive the necessary support to overcome communication challenges that can significantly impact their social interactions, academic success, and overall quality of life.

We recognize the importance of addressing stuttering and the barriers it can create for young individuals, particularly those on the autism spectrum who may already face additional communication challenges. By ensuring that insurance policies cover these essential services, we can help empower young people to develop their communication skills and build confidence in their ability to express themselves.

However, we would like to propose a friendly amendment to the bill that we believe would enhance its effectiveness and reach. Specifically, we suggest expanding the age limit for coverage from under 18 to under 26 years of age. Many young adults continue to face speech and language challenges during their late teens and early twenties, particularly as they transition into higher education and the workforce. By extending the age limit, we can provide essential support to this vulnerable population, helping them to succeed in their personal and professional lives.

Additionally, we recommend broadening the scope of the bill to include coverage for a wider range of speech-language pathology needs beyond stuttering. While stuttering is a significant focus, many individuals experience other speech and language disorders, such as articulation issues, language delays, and social communication difficulties. Including these additional needs in the bill would ensure that all individuals requiring speech-language services have access to the comprehensive care they need.

We believe these friendly amendments will strengthen AB 169 and better serve our community by providing essential support to a larger group of individuals in need. Thank you for considering these suggestions, and we look forward to your response.