To: Autism Funding Unit

From: Brionne McWilliams

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Subject: Proposal for Increasing the Funding for Severely Autistic Child

**Introduction (background and causes of the problem)**

Currently, the government of British Columbia provides funding to children with autism, to help families with the cost of intervention services that will promote communication, social-emotional, academic and functional life skills necessary. Funding for children with autism under age six can access up to $22,000 per year for intervention services and therapies. However, once the children reach six years old, funding decreases to a maximum of $6,000 per year to help pay for out-of-school intervention services and therapies. The government believes that because school-aged children now have access to educational programs and services, families do not need nearly as much funding for interventions and therapies. Despite the educational services provided through the school, I believe that the government should increase the maximum funding amount for children with autism allowing them to participate in the necessary supports and services based on their needs.

**Statement of Problem**

The problem is that the current funding plan does not account for children on the more severe side of the autism spectrum that need even more support than a child who has mild-moderate autism. The significant implications of this problem are: first, children who have severe autism don’t have access to services and supports needed for success; second, the lack of support and services may cause children to fall behind in school, which in turn can make families suffer further.

**Proposed Solution (Describe 1 possible solution)**

One possible solution to the problem of funding is to implement individualized funding for each child based on their unique needs. Basing funding plans on the individualized needs of the child will allow families to access the appropriate interventions and supports needed. Not only would this benefit child with more severe symptoms, but this could also benefit the government financially as children on the lower end of the spectrum would receive less funding.

**Scope**

To assess increasing yearly funding for a child with multiple disabilities, I would like to pursue areas of inquiry:

1. What funding presently are available for children with autism, and what are the qualifications?
2. What is the funding presently used for?
3. Does the introduction of educational programs account for the total decrease in funding provided to school-aged children?
4. What are the necessary services and therapies needed based on the severity of autism?
5. How much additional funding would be required to allow families the external supports needed?
6. What amount of funding can the government bear?

**Methods**

My primary data sources will include interviews with several members of the family to get their point of view on the questions above. I will also do an in-person questionnaire to investigate the point of view of other members from child’s support team – including members of his educational program and members outside of his educational program (occupational therapist).

Secondary sources will include government publications on available funding for autistic children, focusing on the requirements and qualifications of funding plans. Further, I will include academic publications conducted by psychologists concentrating on aspects of autism spectrum disorder.

**My Qualifications**

I have been working as a behavioral interventionist with a family and their autistic child for six months now. In June of last year, I received my B.S. in honours psychology investigating the disorder. Additionally, my association with the family gives me the unique opportunity to conduct an in-depth case study.

**Conclusion**

Individualized government funding is needed to improve the lives of children with autism. By increasing the maximum funding amount available to children with more severe symptoms, families can have access to the therapies and support needed for their children to succeed.

With your approval, I can begin my research.