

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF JENNIFER VANDERHORST-LARSON

Founder & CEO, Holland Center for Autism

Before the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Larson. I am the founder and CEO of the Holland Center for Autism in Minnesota. I have been an autism provider for more than 20 years and started this organization for my son.

I built Holland Center because families with children like mine were desperate for help. Desperate for services and stability. Desperate for somewhere they could trust their child would be supported, and helped — not sent home on a bad day, babysat in a classroom and forgotten. We serve the children that don't succeed in public school settings.

What started as a small program grew over two decades into four locations that families rely on not just for therapy, but for hope, routine, and survival. This work is a labor of love for me. Just like me, there are providers all over the state laboring with love to help children with autism. And this week Holland and other autism programs all over Minnesota, are collapsing.

Not because we committed fraud.

But because a crime ring was **allowed** to operate inside Minnesota's autism services system, and the government's clumsy response is now destroying legitimate longstanding providers and devastating the families we serve.

Families who come to Holland do not have a backstop.

Their children often receive 30 or more hours of therapy per week. These services are not an extravagance. They are medically necessary. They help children learn to communicate, regulate emotions, reduce dangerous behaviors, and function in daily life.

For many parents:

- Therapy hours determine whether they can work
- Consistent staff and therapy prevent severe behaviors and regression

- Structured care keeps children and their siblings safe

When services disappear, families do not simply “adjust.”

They face a crisis.

For more than two decades, Holland has:

- Served hundreds of children, year after year
- Employed hundreds of clinicians and staff
- Operated under yearly onsite audits, inspections, and documentation oversight
- Delivered real services to real children, **every single day**

We have always complied with everything the system required.

Yet within the last month, the state has withheld over \$400,000 in Medicaid funds for my program and that number is growing daily. I had to use a line of credit to survive these weeks but can't survive much longer without payment.

Let me be clear:

We are a fee for service industry. When we can't pay our staff, we lose our staff and children lose care.

Families do not lose “appointments.”

They lose the people they trust.

What happened in Minnesota had nothing to do with the ethical, longstanding autism service providers.

What **did** happen was organized criminal networks that exploited autism services by:

- Opening fake centers
- Billing for children who did not exist
- Billing for services that were never delivered
- And they stole millions of taxpayer dollars in the process

These were not minor compliance issues.

They were criminal enterprises.

Families trusted that the government was protecting the integrity of the system. It failed.

Now, instead of doing the obvious thing and targeting criminal actors, the response has been to freeze payments to everyone.

That decision does not punish criminals.

It punishes innocent children and families.

As Medicaid payments are delayed due to “pre-payment reviews” by an insurance company that is in the business of denying claims:

- Providers are reducing hours, cutting staff and starting to close
- Families are scrambling for alternatives that do not exist
- Children are regressing
- Parents are leaving jobs to care for their disabled children

Autism therapy cannot be paused without consequences.

Loss of services can erase years of progress in weeks and abrupt disruption of services can cause lifelong consequences for these children.

This is not **abstract** harm.

It is daily trauma for families already carrying extraordinary burdens.

There is a simple solution to this problem. Send the criminals to jail. And allow trusted providers, with decades of clean audits and verified ownership structures, to continue providing prescribed, ethical therapy. And go back to paying them what they’ve **earned** and resume paying them on time.

I built Holland for over 20 years.

Families built their lives around the care we provide.

All of that is at risk of destruction today.

Not by fraud —

but by a clumsy government response that fails to distinguish between criminals and caregivers. It treats **children with disabilities as acceptable collateral damage.**

Fraud must be stopped and criminals must be prosecuted.

But families and children should never pay the price for government failure.

Thank you.