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September 30, 2013

Susan Ashe  
Executive Director, Health Sciences & Services Authority  
850 E Spokane Falls Boulevard, Suite 131  
Spokane, WA 99202

Dear Ms. Ashe,

I am writing in support of GemIni's application for grant funding to provide video therapy sessions to newly diagnosed children in the Spokane area. We have reviewed the GemIni site and current supporting research and believe it will be a powerful and cost-effective supplement to treatment opportunities for children with autism.

Northwest Autism Center is committed to building and supporting the provision of comprehensive evidence-based services through the lifespan. We have worked steadily with community partners, researchers, and regulators across the state to improve Spokane's capacity to provide effective evaluation and treatment for those living with autism in our region. Northwest Autism Center continues to receive calls from more than 15 **new** families per month, looking for resources, treatment access, and support. Spokane County had the second highest incidence of children in Washington with autism enrolled in Medicaid in 2011 – almost 1200 children. This number does not include those with private insurance or the uninsured in our county. Estimated numbers of effected children in Washington State are at 20,000. Northwest Autism Center is committed to a concerted community effort to build interdisciplinary care, and to the support of evidence based projects like GemIni, to supplement and enhance outcomes of care.

New insurance mandates from the Washington State Health Care Authority, Medicaid (and many private insurers), were implemented in January of this year, requiring the coverage of Applied Behavior Analysis in the treatment of autism. Research strongly supports the effectiveness of ABA treatment for this disorder when practiced by qualified providers, but it has been a long struggle to retain medical coverage in our state for its use. This, in turn, has negatively impacted

our state's provider pool, and literally thousands of children with autism across the state continue awaiting access to diagnosis and treatment, despite the newly available coverage.

Northwest Autism Center is currently developing a Center of Excellence Treatment Clinic meeting HCA standard of care guidelines and has been working with WSU at Riverpoint Campus and Sacred Heart Children's Hospital to make it an accessible hands-on training opportunity for university and medical students. We are positioned to open the first clinic of this kind in our state and currently have an unsolicited wait list of over 30 families awaiting treatment access. Technology such as GemIni not only provides an appropriate treatment supplement for children with autism enrolled in this kind of program, but can address the immediate gap between diagnosis and access to services; a gap that can have long-lasting consequences for the child awaiting treatment.

The strong technological contribution GemIni brings to our community will expand our region's base for attracting outside financial support of future research in this critical area. National funders are looking for effective and timely referral strategies for early intervention delays. GemIni works to fill that need.

We appreciate your consideration of the GemIni grant application and hope you will invest in this remarkable and unique opportunity for building quality services in Spokane.

Sincerely,



Dawn Sidell, RN BSN  
Executive Director  
Northwest Autism Center

