

# The Permanente Medical Group, Inc.

PEDIATRICS  
9201 BIG HORN BLVD  
ELK GROVE CA 95758-1240  
Dept: 916-478-5200  
Main: 478-5000X0000

January 5, 2024

Re: Kaleb Ceebtsheej Xiong

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Kaleb Xiong, a patient who I have followed since birth. I know his medical history very well and feel I can help address some of his medical concerns.

Kaleb was born with a condition called persistent hyperplastic primary vitreous, which occurs when the vascular structures during eye development fail to regress, or go away. This persistence of fetal vasculature leads to abnormal eye development, and thus the loss of vision. While Kaleb's blindness has posed many challenges to him and his parents, they have made accommodations to support his independence despite this medical condition. Focus on this medical condition may have distracted from another condition that emerged, which is his global developmental delay. As Kaleb grew, the difficulties of managing him became greater as he became more ambulatory. It became apparent that Kaleb's difficulties were not just due to his visual defect, but rather from Autism.

The Xiong family is a large one, and they have raised many children successfully and are aware of normal childhood development. They noted that he wasn't developing like the other children. He had difficulties with learning and communicating, and this made his care difficult as he became more confident in walking and climbing. The family shared examples of eloping, wandering into the street, touching stoves, playing with toilet water, climbing to dangerous heights, and eating inedible objects – all repeatedly. What distinguishes these behaviors from a typical preschooler is that the child can learn to not do these things upon being told. Children are also able to reciprocate with communication by this age, which Kaleb is not able to do. We discussed these observations at the three-year-old physical, and I agreed with the parents' concerns that Kaleb may have Autism. Kaleb was then referred for developmental evaluation, and he was recently diagnosed with Autism through the Alta Regional Center.

Kaleb will be 4 in March, but he is not functioning like a neurotypical preschooler. If Kaleb were not blind, this family would still have a very challenging time caring for Kaleb, as he was categorized in the moderate to severe range of Autism. While the visual impairment adds a different dimension to Kaleb's care and safety, it is not the cause of Kaleb's global delays. Children with blindness still retain the ability to develop normal social communication skills as well as comprehension, and thus the ability to learn. Kaleb currently speaks in single- or 2-word phrases, which is the expected range for a 1-2 year old. It is the significant developmental

delays associated with Autism that place him at risk for safety concerns, resulting in his need for constant supervision.

I support this family's request for any services to enable them to continue caring and raising Kaleb in their home. With his Autism, coupled with his blindness, full time care by anyone outside immediate family is difficult and, in my opinion, not likely attainable. I feel the Xiong family has provided a safe, nurturing home for a child with very high needs.

I am available to discuss further if there are any additional questions for me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Yee-Guardino', with a period at the end.

Dr. Stephanie Yee-Guardino

Assistant Chief of Pediatrics, Elk Grove Big Horn Office

South Sacramento Pediatrics

916-478-5200

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by STEPHANIE ANNE YEE-GUARDINO DO on 1/5/2024