



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

## Senator Smith Applauds Health Insurance Parity For Autism

MALCOLM A. SMITH September 14, 2006



State Senator Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens) today praised a new law extending health insurance coverage to children diagnosed with autism, a neurobiological condition. Under existing law, many health insurance plans that routinely cover similar neurobiological disorders do not cover autism treatment.

"Timing is especially critical in addressing this medical condition, which typically appears during the first three years of life, affecting a child's ability to communicate and learn," said Senator Smith. "Thanks to this new law, early diagnosis and treatment for children with

autism will now be readily available for families dealing with this complex developmental disability."

Senator Smith noted that delayed social skills are a hallmark feature of autism, one of five disorders that fall under the umbrella of Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Autism, the most common, affects an estimated 1 in 166 births. Experts say the best way to address the potentially disabling disorder is through early diagnosis and intensive therapy. Yet many children with autism are not properly diagnosed until years after the first symptoms appear.

"This law goes a long way in making sure that chronically ill children get the vital medical care and therapy they need," the Queens lawmaker said. "I'm very pleased that this important bill was passed and signed into law this year."

Senator Smith also mentioned his continued support of Timothy's Law, a measure that would require insurance coverage for mental illness to be on par with physical health treatment.

"I will continue to advocate for improved access to affordable, quality healthcare for all our State's citizens," Senator Smith concluded. "We must never lose our resolve to see that the special health care needs of all New Yorkers are fully met."

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