

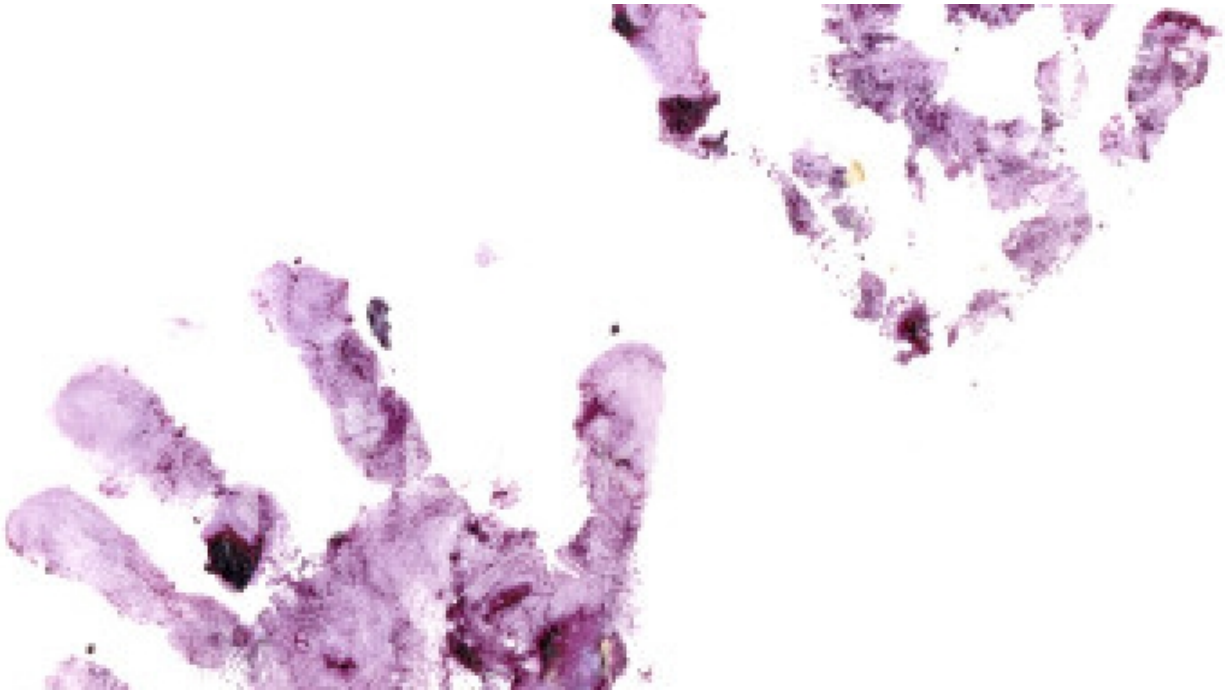


NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

Senator LaValle Supports Coverage for Autism Treatment

KENNETH P. LAVALLE June 17, 2009



Senator Kenneth P. LaValle has cosponsored legislation that would require health insurance companies to cover the cost of autism treatment and therapy for individuals under 21 years of age. The measure would provide up to \$36,000 in benefits annually for treatments including medication, psychiatry, psychology, and speech, occupational, and physical therapies.

Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability with 1 in 150 births being diagnosed with some form of the disease. It is a complex developmental disability that does not discriminate against racial, ethnic, or social groups. Raising a child with autism places a tremendous amount of stress on the family and the lack of health care coverage can lead to financial ruin. In the absence of health insurance, a family

can spend upwards of \$50,000 a year on medical expenses.

While there is no cure for autism, early intervention has proven to be critical to achieving the maximum benefit from existing therapies. Most insurance companies and health maintenance organizations in the state of New York routinely cover treatment for similar neurobiological disorders, but not autism. The measure Senator LaValle cosponsored has bipartisan support and would provide insurance parity for those diagnosed with autism.

“I see no reason why health insurance companies should treat an autism diagnosis differently than any other developmental disability,” said Senator LaValle. “Families are paying thousands of dollars a year for health insurance and they should be assured that this coverage will be available in their greatest time of need.”