



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

## Senator Nozzolio Announces Important Autism Insurance Bill Enacted by State Senate

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 9, 2010

| ISSUE: **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**



The New York State Senate today voted to enact important legislation co-sponsored by State Senator Mike Nozzolio that will require accident and health insurance policies to provide coverage for screening, diagnosis and treatment for patients with autism spectrum disorders.

“With autism, early diagnosis and intense early intervention are critical to gain the most benefit from existing therapies. However, while insurance companies and HMOs routinely cover treatment for similar neurobiological disorders, most health insurance plans in New York do not cover autism treatment. This legislation will close a significant gap in insurance coverage for individuals with autism,” said Senator Nozzolio.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has now estimated that one out of every 110 American children is affected by an autism spectrum disorder, a significantly higher rate than reported in previous years. However, children with autism throughout New York State have been routinely denied insurance benefits for treatment of their disorder, forcing their parents to pay for these therapy costs. Therapy for children with autism typically run between \$20,000 and \$50,000 per year.

“The early diagnosis and treatment afforded by this legislation will actually cut long term health care costs,” said Senator Nozzolio. “By identifying and treating autism early, this reduces the long term costs normally associated with this disorder.”

Senator Nozzolio’s legislation will require insurance policies to provide comprehensive coverage for individuals with autism spectrum disorder throughout their entire life span. The legislation received strong bi-partisan support and was enacted unanimously by the State Senate.

“There are literally thousands of families in the Finger Lakes region affected by autism,” said Senator Nozzolio. “This legislation is an important step forward for New York to become a leader in providing services and ensuring protections for those with autism.”

Senator Nozzolio has long been a committed advocate for individuals diagnosed with autism. He is also currently sponsoring legislation (S.6880) which would create the New York Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment, Training and Research Council. This Council will bring together the resources available in New York by uniting a range of public and private entities and will create a State Policy and Plan to address the primary needs of citizens impacted by autism spectrum disorders.

“As increased awareness and early diagnosis of autism presents challenges and issues which must be addressed, it is essential that we continue to support additional programs and services for families dealing with this diagnosis,” said Senator Nozzolio. “I will continue to advocate for those affected by this disorder and fight for legislation to provide needed health care services for these children.”

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