



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

## Senate Passes Legislation to Ensure Children with Autism Receive the Medical Care They Deserve

DAVID J. VALESKY June 9, 2010

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Syracuse, NY - Landmark legislation (S7000B), co-sponsored by Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida), which will end the discriminatory practices by insurance companies against children with autism disorders passed the New York State Senate today.

“Often, families affected by autism are forced to pay for medical treatment on their own without the support of insurance agencies,” said Senator Valesky. “This legislation gives families the ability to rely on their insurance to help alleviate some of that financial impact.”

The bill will require insurance companies to provide early intervention screening, diagnosis and treatments for autism spectrum disorders, saving families facing autism thousands of dollars a year.

“The unanimous passage of this landmark legislation will at long last provide New York families dealing with the challenges of autism the access to care that will truly impact their quality of life,” Judit Ursitti, of AutismSpeaks, said. “We thank Senator Valesky and Senator Breslin for working with the autism community to see this through.”

Despite research that has shown early intervention and intensive behavioral therapies can result in significant improvement in the quality of life for those with autism, diagnosis and treatment have been excluded from coverage by health insurance carriers in New York.

The prior insurance law did not provide clarity to consumers or insurers as to the scope of the required coverage. This bill includes an updated definition of autism spectrum disorder, and tells insurers what must be covered. The Commissioner of Health would be responsible for publicizing regulations identifying treatment and therapy options for autism coverage.

Twenty states previously spoke up for those affected by autism by passing legislation to provide them with insurance coverage. The passage of this much needed legislation would make New York the 21st state to require such coverage. This bill is one of the strongest in the nation, not only requiring policies to cover autism, but does so without a financial cap. Furthermore, the coverage is extended for the entire life span of the individual.

The Centers for Disease Control have now estimated that the number of children with autism is 1 in 110 nationwide, up from previous estimates of 1 in 150. The numbers are even more stark in New York, with the autism rate for children increasing by about 15% per year. Recent studies have shown that close to 1 in 90 children are affected by autism. Currently, there are 17,000 students ages 4 to 21 classified by New York schools as having autism.

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