



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William T. Stachowski

## SENATOR STACHOWSKI VOTES TO EXTEND HEALTH CARE COVERAGE TO INCLUDE AUTISM: Measure Includes Lifetime Coverage Without Financial Caps

WILLIAM T. STACHOWSKI June 9, 2010

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Senator William T. Stachowski (D, Lake View), today announced the New York State Senate has passed groundbreaking legislation to protect children with autism. The legislation (S.7000-B) will establish a national model requiring health care coverage for autism, saving families thousands of dollars a year.

The measure would require health insurers to cover the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorder. As a result, a significant gap in insurance coverage for individuals with autism would be closed. Current law does not provide clarity to consumers or insurers as to the scope of required coverage. The legislative change would update the definition of autism spectrum disorder and tell insurers exactly what must be covered. In addition, the Commissioner of Health would be given the responsibility of setting regulations identifying treatment and therapy options for autism coverage.

“This is a long-awaited day for those entrenched in the fight against autism,” said Senator

William T. Stachowski. "Autism will no longer be a barrier to health care coverage for thousands of New York citizens."

The Centers for Disease Control have now estimated that the number of children with autism is one in 110 nationwide, up from previous estimates of 1 in 150. In the State of New York, this number increases to close to 1 in 90 affected by autism, with the autism rate for children increasing by almost 15-percent per year.

Twenty states have previously passed legislation covering autism. New York would become the twenty-first, with one of the strongest laws among them, covering individuals for life while not imposing a financial cap. Only evidence-based and clinically proven treatments are to be covered.

Studies show that health services targeted to address the medical complications and comorbidities of autism can significantly improve physical and social functioning of children. If autistic children receive intensive early evidence based psycho/social and medical treatment, they can have a higher level of functionality and are much less likely to need life-long support services which will save taxpayers in the future. In fact, cost analyses show that every dollar spent on early treatment will save \$5 to \$7 in long-term costs.

"Treating autism on the front end will end up saving money in the long run," remarked Senator Stachowski. "So doing the right thing on behalf of our autistic citizens ends up making us all better off."

The bill was sent to the Assembly.