



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## Senator Fuschillo & Assemblyman Morelle Introduce Bill to Protect Individuals WITH Autism

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. March 14, 2011

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### ***Legislation Would Ensure that Screening, Diagnosis, & Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders are Covered by Insurance***

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. and Assemblyman Joseph D. Morelle have introduced legislation to ensure that individuals with autism receive insurance coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

Currently, individuals with autism are routinely denied insurance benefits for treatment of their disorder, forcing them to spend tens of thousands of dollars out of their own pockets to cover treatment costs.

Senator Fuschillo (R-Merrick) said, “No family should have to choose between forgoing important health treatments or going broke to get care for their loved one. However, many families with a loved one who has autism must do just that because their health insurance company refuses to cover autism treatment costs. This legislation would put an end to that by ensuring that families have the costs of screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders covered by insurance.”

“Autism is a disorder affecting a growing number of families, and they deserve access to affordable health care insurance and treatments that will help their children lead better lives,” said Assemblyman Morelle (D-Irondequoit), Chairman of the Assembly’s Insurance Committee. “It is time to establish parity for those with autism, and I’m grateful to Speaker Silver and Senator Fuschillo, Autism Speaks and all the other advocates who have fought so hard for this critical change.”

The legislation (S4005/A6305) would require insurance companies to provide coverage for the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. In addition, the legislation would prohibit an insurance company from terminating coverage or refusing to renew, adjust, amend, issue, or execute a policy solely because the individual has been diagnosed or received treatment for autism spectrum disorders.

Senator Fuschillo and Assemblyman Morelle sponsored a similar bill last year that passed both houses of the legislature unanimously but was vetoed by former Governor David Paterson.

Michael Giangregorio of Merrick, who has a son with autism, said, “My family has spent over \$85,000 over the years to care for my son, which has depleted our savings and reduced our retirement funds. Far too many others have been forced to do the same, or worse, could not get care for their loved one because they simply exhausted their finances. Senator Fuschillo’s legislation would put an end to that and ensure that families have access to treatment. Senator Fuschillo has been a true friend and advocate for families with autism, and I am grateful for his unwavering support.”

The legislation builds upon an existing law, authored by Senator Fuschillo and supported by Assemblyman Morelle, which prevents insurance companies from denying treatment coverage otherwise covered by the policy solely because the treatment is provided to diagnose or treat an autism spectrum disorder.

The legislation is supported by Autism Speaks, one of the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organizations.

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