



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Senator Rivera Recognizes Autism Awareness Month, Announces Support for Autism Insurance Legislation

GUSTAVO RIVERA April 28, 2011

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Bronx, NY – Senator Gustavo Rivera (D, WF-Bronx) recognized Autism Awareness Month and announced his support for legislation that would provide screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, help to end discriminatory practices impacting New Yorkers. Since being elected, Senator Rivera has visited with organizations that provide critical services for children and families impacted by autism in the Bronx, including Quality Services for the Autism Community (QSAC), the Bronx Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Council and Unique People Services.

“Autism is a condition that affects many children and families,” said Senator Rivera. This disorder has impacted my own family, as my brother was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 2. A growing number of children are being diagnosed with autism, and consequently, a growing number of New Yorkers now have a personal connection to the disorder.

However, most people who have not had a personal experience with the condition have little knowledge of the condition and find it difficult to understand. It is for that reason that it is so important that New Yorkers are aware of autism, the need to properly screen, diagnose and treat autism as well as the effect the disorder can have on children and families.

It is just as important, however, that our state government recognize the importance of ensuring that New York's children are able to receive screening, diagnoses and treatment for Autism as well as the impact that autism can have on New York children and families. That is why I am a co-sponsor of S. 4005, legislation that seeks to end discriminatory health insurance practices, helping thousands of New York families receive the coverage they need. As elected officials, we must all work together, Democrats and Republicans, in a bipartisan manner to pass legislation that requires insurance companies to cover screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism and then ensure this legislation is signed into law.”

Last year, the Senate and Assembly passed similar legislation, seeking to establish a national model requiring health care coverage for autism, saving families of children with autism thousands of dollars a year. Unfortunately, while 24 states have already passed similar measures, this legislation was vetoed last session by Governor Patterson.

Autism is a neural development disorder. Indicators of the disorder include impaired social interaction and communication, as well as restricted and repetitive behavior. According to the Center for Disease Control, just three decades ago only 3.5 children out of every 10,000 were diagnosed with autism. However, current rates indicate 1 in every 110 children is afflicted.

April was designated in 1970 by the National Autism Society as National Autism Awareness Month in order to highlight the growing need for concern and awareness about autism. For more information about autism, visit [www. autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) and www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html.

