



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo's Landmark Autism Insurance Reform Legislation Passed by Senate

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. June 17, 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. (R-Merrick) today announced that the New York State Senate has approved his legislation which would enable individuals with autism to receive insurance coverage for the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders.

The legislation would stop families with autism from being forced to spend tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket every year because their insurance companies refuse to cover costs for autism treatments and therapies.

Autism Spectrum Disorders affect individuals of all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 1 in 110 children, including 1 in 70 boys, are currently affected with autism. More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes, and cancer combined, according to Autism Speaks, one of the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organizations.

"This is a giant step forward towards helping families with autism get the care they need. Many of these families are literally going broke paying for this care because their insurance companies refuse to provide coverage. It's long past time to give these families access to treatment coverage just like any other condition, and ensure that they are not denied services solely because of an autism diagnosis. That's exactly what this legislation would do," said Senator Fuschillo.

The legislation (S4005A/A6305A) would require insurance companies to provide coverage for the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, including behavioral health treatments, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Insurance companies would be prohibited 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.

Michael Giangregorio of Merrick, who has a son with autism and is the Long Island Volunteer Executive Chair of Autism Speaks, said, "I am extremely pleased that this legislation has been passed by the State Senate. This would put an end to families depleting their savings and exhausting their finances to pay for treatments which their insurance company refuses to cover. I thank Senator Fuschillo for fighting to ensure that my family and other families who have a loved one with autism have access to the care they need."

The legislation builds upon an existing law, authored by Senator Fuschillo, 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.

If this legislation becomes law, New York would join twenty-five other states which have already enacted similar autism insurance reform laws.

The legislation is supported by a number of different organizations, including Autism Speaks, the Medical Society of the State of New York, the New York State Association for Behavior Analysis, and Families Together in New York State.

Autism Speaks stated in a memo of support that the “landmark legislation” will “finally ensure that thousands of New York families receive the benefit of health coverage for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder.” In addition, the memo noted that the lifetime societal costs of autism can “be reduced dramatically by early intervention.”

In a memo supporting the legislation, the Medical Society of the State of New York stated that the legislation “would expedite diagnosis and treatment by providing insurance parity for autism sufferers by requiring equitable coverage of the disorder by insurance companies.” Additionally, the Society noted that “treatment of autism spectrum disorders will result in better long-term health outcomes for those afflicted with this condition and should, therefore, lessen costs which are borne by taxpayers.”

The New York State Association for Behavior Analysis noted in a memo of support that it “strongly supports the enactment of this important bill” because “given the increasing need, insurance coverage for this disorder is essential.”

The legislation has also been approved by the Assembly and will be sent to Governor Cuomo for consideration.

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