



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

Senate Gives Final Legislative Approval for Landmark Autism Insurance Reform

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO June 20, 2011

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Senator John A. DeFrancisco (R-I-C Syracuse) announced that the New York State Senate today passed a bill that he co-sponsored (S.4005A), which would enable individuals with autism spectrum disorders to receive insurance coverage for screening, diagnosis and treatment.

The legislation 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 with or received treatment for autism spectrum disorders.

“The best outcomes for children with the Autism Spectrum Disorder occur with early diagnosis,” said Senator John DeFrancisco (R-C-I, Syracuse). “This is a landmark bill, which will help to ensure that early diagnosis will occur and that appropriate treatment will follow.”

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.

If the Governor signs the bill, New York would join 25 other states, which have already enacted similar autism insurance reform laws. It is supported by a number of organizations, including Autism Speaks, the Medical Society of the State of New York, the New York State Occupational Therapy Association, the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, and Families Together in New York State.

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 bill will be sent to the Governor.