



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Roy J. McDonald

## McDonald Applauds Action on Autism Insurance Legislation

ROY J. MCDONALD November 1, 2011

Albany – Governor Andrew Cuomo signed Autism insurance legislation into law today at a ceremony at the Capitol. Senator Roy McDonald, who is the Chairman of the New York State Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, is proud that the legislation he sponsored to help many families dealing with autism will become law.

“Autism is quickly erupting into epidemic levels with diagnosis rates climbing at an astonishing level, this is a mental health issue that is going to get much worse before it gets better,” said McDonald. “So I want to thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership and support of this bill, along with my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly who sponsored this legislation.”

Under the law, insurance companies will be required to provide coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, including behavioral health treatments, speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy. Many insurance companies have routinely denied coverage for these treatments, forcing families to choose between exhausting their finances and foregoing important treatments due to high costs. Insurance companies will also be prohibited from terminating coverage or refusing to renew, adjust, amend, issue or execute a policy solely because an individual has been diagnosed with or received treatment for autism spectrum disorders.

The new law builds upon an existing law, authored by Senator Charles Fuschillo (R-Merrick), which prevents insurance companies from denying coverage for treatments otherwise covered by the policy solely because the treatment is provided to diagnose or treat an autism spectrum disorder. Senator Fuschillo was a lead sponsor on the Autism insurance legislation.

“We cannot allow families choose between putting food on the table and giving their loved on the appropriate medical treatments, especially when these families have medical insurance that is able to cover those treatments. **This is a first step in the right direction but there’s a significant amount more that needs to be done,**” said McDonald.

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