



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## Senator Fuschillo's Autism Insurance Reform Legislation Signed by Governor Cuomo

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. November 1, 2011

| ISSUE: **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) today announced that legislation he sponsors to enable individuals with autism spectrum disorders to receive insurance coverage for screening, diagnosis and treatment has been signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo. The new law will save families with autism tens of thousands of dollars a year in out of pocket costs for autism treatment and therapies which many insurance companies refuse to cover.

"Today is a great day for individuals with autism. For years, families have fought for access to treatment coverage for their loved ones. This new law will afford individuals with autism the opportunity to receive treatments and therapies they need without being forced to spend tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket every year. I thank Governor Cuomo for signing this law which will dramatically improve the lives of every New York family affected by autism," said Senator Fuschillo (R-Merrick), who sponsored the legislation in the Senate.

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 or forgoing important treatments because they can't afford the cost. Insurance companies will also 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 new law builds upon an existing law, authored by Senator Fuschillo, to ensure that individuals with autism receive equitable coverage.

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.

Michael Giangregorio of Merrick, who has a son with autism and is the Long Island Volunteer Executive Chair of Autism Speaks, said, "This a day for which my family and every other New York family who has a loved one with autism has been waiting a long time. After years of fighting, we will finally be able to get our loved ones the treatment and care they need without having to exhaust our own finances. I thank Governor Cuomo for signing this law, but I'm especially grateful to Senator Fuschillo for never giving up the fight to get this law passed; this would not have happened without him. He has continually stood up for my family and every other family with autism, and we will never forget what he did for us."

With the signing of the law, New York now joins 28 other states which have enacted similar autism insurance reform laws. The law was supported by Autism Speaks, the Medical Society of the State of New York, New York State Association for Behavior Analysis, and Families Together in New York State.

The new law takes effect on November 1, 2012.

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