



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## Senator Fuschillo Calls on Senate Leadership to Bring His Autism Insurance Reform Bill to a Vote

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. July 16, 2009

### *52 Out of the 62 State Senators Support Fuschillo Legislation to Protect Children with Autism*

New York State Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. today called on the leadership in the State Senate to allow a vote on his legislation to give health care coverage to children with autism. With 52 out of the New York State Senators cosponsoring the legislation, Senator Fuschillo said there should be no reason to delay.

“Nearly every New York State Senator supports this bill; the time to pass it is now. With such an overwhelming level of support, the Senate leadership should bring this bill to a vote so children with autism can get the care they need,” said Senator Fuschillo (R-Merrick).

The legislation is needed because children with autism throughout New York State are routinely denied insurance benefits for treatment of their disorder. Parents are then forced to pay for their children’s therapy costs out of their own pocket. Therapy costs for children with autism typically run between \$20,000 - \$50,000 per year.

Under Senator Fuschillo’s legislation, private insurance companies would be required to offer treatment coverage for children with autism ages 21 and under. Treatments that would be covered under the proposed law include medications, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, applied behavioral analysis, counseling, psychiatric and psychological care and any other care determined by the State Department of Health to be medically necessary.

The maximum coverage benefit would be \$36,000 through December 31, 2010, after which the benefit would be adjusted annually for inflation by the New York State Superintendent of Insurance. There would be no limits on the number of visits an individual may make to an autism provider (up to the \$36,000 limit). Payments made by an insurer for treatment or care unrelated to autism spectrum disorders would

not be applied towards the maximum benefit.

Ten states require health insurers to provide autism services, including, Indiana, South Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Mexico and Montana. Bills requiring the coverage are pending in more than twenty other states, including Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. It is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States, and is more common than pediatric cancer, AIDS, and diabetes combined. It is part of a group of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASD). According to the Center for Disease Control, 1 in 150 children are diagnosed with ASD. It occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups and is four times more likely to strike boys than girls. Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.