



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

Bonacic: Legislature Should Vote on Autism Bill Next Week

JOHN J. BONACIC October 21, 2009

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October 21, 2009: State Senator John J. Bonacic (R/I/C – Mt. Hope) called on Senate President Malcolm Smith and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, to bring legislation up for a vote at next week's anticipated special session, which would provide insurance coverage for children up to the age of 21 diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

Senator Bonacic is a co-sponsor of the legislation, S.2366-a.

"Autism is a growing concern to more and more families. Providing insurance coverage to families who are coping with this issue can reduce long term care costs and help these young people have more meaningful lives and a greater opportunity for complete independence," Senator Bonacic said.

In a study published in October, 2009 in the American Academy of Pediatrics' Journal, parents reported an autism prevalence rate of one in every ninety one American children. More formal medical diagnoses of autism, indicate that one out of one hundred and fifty children is formally diagnosed with autism in the United States.

"We have the votes in the Senate to pass this legislation. I am aware that insurance companies and some special interests groups oppose it, but families of those with autism often spend a substantial amount of money to obtain the services they need to help their child. Providing that treatment now provides the best opportunities for those with autism," Senator Bonacic said.

Early diagnosis and intense early intervention of autism has been proven to be beneficial to young people.

Moreover, while many insurance companies and HMOs cover treatment for similar neurobiological disorders, many of them currently do not cover autism treatment. Autism is more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined.

Without insurance coverage, families sometimes pay tens of thousands of dollars each year to provide autism related services to their children. Families have had to remortgage homes, forego the purchase of a home, and raid college tuition plans to pay for autism services. "Parents should not have to choose between necessary medical expenses for their children and paying their mortgage. We have the votes to pass this legislation, we need to act," concluded Senator Bonacic.

For more information on autism, visit www.autismspeaks.org.

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