



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Neil D. Breslin

Landmark Legislation Ensuring Children With Autism Receive The Medical Care They Deserve Passed The State Senate

NEIL D. BRESLIN June 10, 2010

| ISSUE: **INSURANCE**

| COMMITTEE: **INSURANCE**

For Immediate Release: June 10, 2010

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(Albany, NY)-The Senate Democratic Majority passed groundbreaking legislation to protect children with autism, setting the bar for a new national standard for treatment and services. The legislation sponsored by Senator Neil D. Breslin (D-Delmar), Chair of the Insurance Committee, requires health insurers to cover early intervention screening, diagnosis and treatment for autism spectrum disorders, saving families facing autism thousands of dollars a year.

Despite research demonstrating that early intervention and intensive behavioral therapies can yield significant improvement in the quality of life for those with autism, diagnosis and treatment have been excluded from coverage by health insurance carriers in New York.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Health will be responsible for publicizing regulations identifying the specific treatment and therapy options that insurers must cover. "This law

would restore the voice of those indirectly affected by autism. Many families paying out-of-pocket for autism treatments risk their homes and the educations of their unaffected children, mortgaging their entire futures for something that should be covered by basic health insurance” said Senator Breslin.

This bill is one of the strongest in the nation, not only requiring policies to cover autism, but does so without a financial cap. The bill would only allow evidence-based and clinically proven treatments to be covered. Furthermore, the coverage is extended for the entire life span of the individual. Twenty states previously spoke up for those affected by autism by passing legislation to provide them with insurance coverage. The passage of this much needed legislation makes New York the 21st state to require such coverage.

The Centers for Disease Control have now estimated that the number of children with autism is 1 in 110 nationwide, up from previous estimates of 1 in 150. The numbers are even more stark in New York, with the autism rate for children increasing by about 15-percent per year. Recent studies have shown that close to 1 in 90 children are affected by autism. Currently, there are 17,000 students ages 4 to 21 classified by New York schools as having autism.

The bill is expected to be considered in the Assembly next week.

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