



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo and Assemblyman Morelle Announce Agreement on Landmark Autism Insurance Reform

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. June 23, 2011

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State Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R, Merrick) and Assemblyman Joseph D. Morelle (D, Rochester) today announced an agreement between the Legislature and the Governor's office in support of legislation to enable individuals with autism spectrum disorders to receive insurance coverage for screening, diagnosis and treatment. The bill (S.4005-A) would save tens of thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses spent by families caring for individuals with autism and address insurance companies' refusal to cover costs for autism treatments and therapies.

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.

The legislation, which has been approved by the Senate and the Assembly and will shortly be sent to the Governor's office for his signature, requires insurance companies to provide coverage for the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorders, including behavioral health treatments, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy.

Insurance companies would 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.

Senator Fuschillo said, "This law will be a giant step forward towards helping families with autism get the care they need. No longer will these families be forced to spend tens of thousands of dollars each year paying for autism treatments and therapies which their insurance companies refuse to cover. Finally, they will have exactly what they deserve; access to treatment coverage just like any other condition and protection from being denied services solely because of an autism diagnosis. I am pleased that we were able to work together to make this a reality,"

Assemblyman Morelle said, "Families dealing with an autism diagnosis should not be burdened by financial hardships because of the refusal of their insurance carriers to cover treatments and therapies proven to be effective. This is landmark legislation that will bring peace of mind to parents and mean potentially brighter futures for children on the autism spectrum. This is a major step toward parity for a childhood developmental disorder that is increasingly common and affects more and more families every day."

Michael Giangregorio of Merrick, who has a son with autism and is the Long Island Volunteer Executive Chair of Autism Speaks, said, "This is a great day for my family and every other New York family who has a loved one with autism. Getting access to treatment coverage means that we will no longer be forced to exhaust our finances just to give our loved ones the care they need. Thank you to Governor Cuomo, Assemblyman Morelle, and most especially Senator Fuschillo, who has continually stood up for families with autism and never given up the fight to get this law passed."

The legislation builds upon an existing law, authored by Senator Fuschillo, which prevents insurance companies from denying treatment coverage otherwise covered by the policy solely because the treatment is provided to diagnose or treat an autism spectrum disorder.

Once this legislation becomes law, New York would join 25 other states which have already enacted similar autism insurance reform laws. It is supported by a number of different organizations, including 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.

In a memo supporting the legislation, the Medical Society of the State of New York stated that the legislation “would expedite diagnosis and treatment by providing insurance parity for autism sufferers by requiring equitable coverage of the disorder by insurance companies.” Additionally, the Society noted that “treatment of autism spectrum disorders will result in better long-term health outcomes for those afflicted with this condition and should, therefore, lessen costs which are borne by taxpayers.”

The bill will be sent to the Governor.

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