



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Fuschillo-Martins Autism Bill Signed Into Law

JACK M. MARTINS November 2, 2011

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**



A bill authored by Senator Charles Fuschillo, Jr. and co-sponsored by Senator Jack M. Martins that enables individuals with autism spectrum disorders to receive insurance coverage for screening, diagnosis and treatment has been signed into law 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.

"This was landmark legislation that I was proud to co-sponsor. It addresses a need in all of our communities. Individuals with autism should be given every opportunity to succeed. This was one of the most important measures to come out of this past legislative session and I want to thank Senator Fuschillo for his leadership on it," Senator Martins said, adding, "this will help ease the burden on families with loved ones with autism spectrum disorders by ensuring that they receive the treatment they deserve."

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.

"Raising twin sons with autism, now 21, has been tremendously stressful and financially draining for my family. This desperately needed and long awaited legislation will finally enable us to get the treatment and services for our sons that they deserve. I applaud and deeply thank Senator Charles J. Fuschillo Jr., lead sponsor of this bill, and co-sponsors Senator Jack Martins and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel for their steadfast support,

and Governor Cuomo for signing it into law. If my sons could speak I know they would say thank you too," said Robyn Schneider of the Eden II/Genesis School.

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.

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 will take effect on November 1, 2012.