



# SENATOR ROY MCDONALD

43<sup>rd</sup> District Senator

Serving Rensselaer and Saratoga County

## **New York State Senator Roy McDonald Calls for the Creation of an “Autism Bill of Rights” and a Statewide Autism Council, Along with Action on Proposed Autism Insurance Legislation.**

**Albany** – Long time autism advocate, Senator Roy McDonald (Saratoga), today called for the creation of an “Autism Bill of Rights” to protect the rights of individuals diagnosed on the autistic spectrum. McDonald has also introduced legislation to create a statewide council on autism, and is advocating for legislative action for autism insurance.

McDonald is looking into the creation of an “Autism Bill of Rights” to ensure fair medical and social treatment, access to appropriate care, recognition of early detection and intervention, and guaranteed funding for programs that assist those with autism and similar type developmental disabilities.

“This is a call to arms for friends, family, and supporters of those with autism and similar type developmental disabilities,” said McDonald. “With occurrence of autism diagnosis in newborns increasing to a staggering 1 in 110, this has reached epidemic proportions. It’s time for New York to become a leader in providing services and ensuring protections for the families and those with autism and similar type disabilities.”

McDonald introduced legislation last week to create a statewide council on autism, the New York Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment, Training and Research Council, that will develop a comprehensive state policy to address the needs of the growing autism population in New York State. The council will also establish regional autism resource centers which will act as central clearinghouses providing individuals with autism, and their families, with the services, support and treatment they need.

In addition, McDonald has called for action on autism insurance legislation that would require private insurers to cover the costs of autism treatment and therapy. These medical costs associated with special disability services can be extremely high for individual families to provide for their loved one diagnosed with autism.

“These topics and concepts will assist the hard working families, single mothers, and relatives that are concerned with assisting their loved one who is affected. Hopefully, with the passage of these legislative items New York State can become a leader in providing for and offering the best services for these individuals who, in no fault of their own, have been affected by very challenging situations,” said McDonald.

Senator Roy McDonald became familiar with autism and similar type disabilities when he learned that his two grandsons; Jacob and David, now aged seven and five respectively, were both diagnosed when the eldest was a toddler and the youngest was a baby. Each child has been diagnosed at a different level on the autistic spectrum.

McDonald has demonstrated a significant first hand understanding of the issue, which has allowed him to become the chairman on a New York State Senate Task Force on Autism and Similar Type Development Disabilities. He chaired a similar task force as a member of the New York State Assembly in 2007 and 2008. In his role as Chairman, McDonald has held seminars and forums across the state to directly hear the needs of families affected by autism.