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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 7, 2020

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****PRESS RELEASE****

Skoufis Releases COVID-19 Tips for Families With a Child of Special Needs

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) released the accompanying infographic of tips for families with a differently-abled child who is now at home due to the Coronavirus pandemic. These tips are tailored for individuals and families with a loved one on the autism spectrum but can be helpful for anyone home with children during this challenging time.

Tips included are:

- Stay informed - have a conversation with your children providing statistics and facts making them fully aware of what is happening; the goal is not to scare them with information, but to help them feel informed and prepared.
- Practice good hygiene - create visual cues and reminder cards to demonstrate hand washing practices.
- Remain calm - it is important for parents and caregivers to portray a calm demeanor during an emergency like quarantine and other significant changes in routine.
- Prepare a 'safety and calm' kit - this could include: sensory toys, therapeutic comfort aid, weighted blanket, list of medications, identification documents.
- Be prepared for immediate needs before a possible emergency - create a network of relatives, friends or co-workers to assist in an emergency. Make sure to wear any needed medical alert tags or bracelets to identify you or your loved one's needs.
- Keep the following in mind - keep routines as close as possible to a typical day; using a word or picture-word schedule, make substitutions where necessary; replicate school schedule as much as possible with academics or homework practice, snack or story time, etc.; explain to the child in a factual, positive way why these changes have occurred and that it's important to stay safe and healthy; be mindful of siblings and supporting family members.

Senator James Skoufis said, “Every single family in our community is affected by this pandemic right now. For parents, especially, who depend on a school routine for their children, being asked to stay in your home for an unknown period of time can be challenging. That’s why my team and I worked with professionals in the field to put together this infographic of tips for families who have a loved one with special needs at home. These are simple, everyday ways that can help make an incredibly difficult situation a little bit easier.”

Stacey Orzell, Autism Move A Thon of Orange County Consultant and Special Olympic Swim Coach said, “Preventative preparedness is essential to ensuring your family will have the best possible outcomes in unexpected circumstances. In a moment of panic, one has challenges focusing and can easily *miss a beat*. This can be especially concerning for families with children who have special needs. I think it is wonderful that Senator James Skoufis and his team have made time to produce a resource care guide of reminders for families of differently-abled individuals. The information will help ensure success for health, safety, and is helpful for any family.”

Attached please find the infographic.

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