



From: **AUTISM SPEAKS**
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUTISM SPEAKS APPLAUDS COLORADO GOVERNOR
BILL RITTER JR. FOR ENACTING AUTISM INSURANCE REFORM BILL**

**Colorado Becomes Twelfth State in the Nation with Comprehensive Autism
Insurance Reform**

NEW YORK, NY (June 3, 2009) -- Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, yesterday joined the Colorado autism community to praise Governor Bill Ritter Jr. for signing into law Senate Bill 09-244, which requires insurance companies to provide coverage of evidence-based, medically necessary autism therapies. Colorado is now the twelfth state in the country to enact comprehensive autism insurance reform.

The Colorado law requires insurers to provide coverage for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, a recognized effective, evidence-based treatment for children with autism. SB 09-244 was sponsored by State Senator Brandon Shaffer (D-17) in the State Senate and was shepherded through the State House by Representative Dianne Primavera.

"Health care reform is a central part of the Colorado Promise and my strategy for leading Colorado forward," Gov. Ritter said. "Over the last 2½ years, we've increased availability, improved quality and addressed costs. The bills I am signing today will help continue our efforts to build a strong, sustainable health care system for Colorado."

"The new Colorado law represents another major step in the national effort to secure autism insurance coverage and provide families the help they so desperately need and deserve," said Elizabeth Emken, Autism Speaks Vice President of Government Relations. "Legislatures across the country are introducing and passing bills that put an end to the discriminatory practices by insurance companies against children with an autism diagnosis. We thank Colorado's legislators and Governor Bill Ritter Jr. for having the courage to put families and their needs first".

In many states, insurers explicitly exclude coverage of these therapies from policies, which places a significant financial burden on families seeking to provide their children with necessary services. Colorado is the fourth state to pass autism insurance reform this year, and joins eleven other states – Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas – that have

passed similar autism insurance reform bills. Connecticut has a similar bill awaiting signature by the governor.

To learn more about Autism Votes, an initiative of Autism Speaks focused on federal and state legislative advocacy, please visit www.autismvotes.org.

About Autism

Autism is a complex brain disorder that inhibits a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by behavioral challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 150 children in the United States, affecting four times as many boys as girls. The prevalence of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is the nation's ["world's" for WAAD and other international releases] largest autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks funds more than \$30 million each year in new autism research, in addition to supporting the Autism Treatment Network, Autism Genetic Resource Exchange, Autism Clinical Trials Network, Autism Tissue Program and a range of other scientific and medical programs. Notable awareness initiatives include the establishment of the annual United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2 and an award-winning, multi-year national public service advertising campaign with the Ad Council. Autism Speaks' family services efforts include the Autism Video Glossary, a 100 Day Kit for newly-diagnosed families, a School Community Tool Kit and the distribution of community grants to local service providers. Its government relations department, through its Autism Votes initiative, has played a critical role in securing federal legislation to advance the federal government's response to autism, and has successfully advocated for insurance reform to require insurers to cover medically-necessary autism therapies. Each year, Autism Speaks *Walk Now for Autism* fundraising events are held in more than 70 cities across the country, as well as Canada and the United Kingdom.

Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism, and provides a voice to hundreds of thousands of families. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org.

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