



For Immediate Release
April 2, 2009

Contact: Caitlin Kelleher
505.476.2299

Governor Bill Richardson Signs Autism Bill on World Autism Awareness Day

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today signed a bill that provides children with autism spectrum disorder with the opportunity to get certain health benefits from insurance providers. Senate Bill 39 was sponsored by Senator Clint Harden of Clovis.

“So many New Mexican families with autistic children can’t afford to pay for therapy and medical services out of pocket -- this bill will help ease the costs for those dealing with autism spectrum disorder,” said Governor Richardson. “While most health insurance policies have significant limitations on treatment, New Mexico will now have a law in place that will give people living with autism, the benefits they deserve.”

Senate Bill 39 increases the health insurance benefits for individuals with autism under the age of 19 or 22 if they are still in high school. Under the law, private insurance providers must cover the diagnosis and treatment of autism. Studies have shown that treatment of autism spectrum disorder at an early age is most effective.

“This is a subject close to my heart and I am extremely proud to have sponsored this important piece of legislation. I’d like to thank Governor Richardson for signing this bill into law,” said Senator Harden.

The United Nations General Assembly declared April 2 World Autism Awareness Day by resolution in 2007. More than 67 million people around the world have autism.

##