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House Democrats Push Plan to Cover Michigan Kids with Autism

Plan will give medical support to Michigan children

LANSING – Michigan House Democrats today urged House Leadership to take up legislation that would require insurance companies to cover the treatment of autism, a brain disorder that affects one in 110 children, including 15,000 Michigan kids.

“Thousands of Michigan children and their families unfairly suffer because insurance companies simply refuse to cover the needed treatment of this disorder,” said State Representative **Lisa Brown** (D-West Bloomfield), sponsor of House Bills 4604 and 4605. “We applaud Gov. Rick Snyder and Lt. Gov. Brian Calley for their efforts to advocate for those with autism, and we call on the Michigan Legislature to pass real reforms that will give our kids and their families the support and resources they need to live full lives. This debate has gone on long enough and it is time for the Legislature to finally act and get these bills to the Governor.”

In September, Gov. Snyder called for insurance companies to cover Michiganders with autism. Lt. Gov. Calley has a daughter with autism and has been an outspoken voice on autism issues.

The House Democrats' plan under House Bills 4604 and 4605 would require insurance companies provide group coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders, the umbrella term for a range of disorders generically called autism. The coverage includes rehabilitative care, medications and other follow-up evidence-based treatments. Today, 27 states already require insurance coverage for autism.

According to a landmark 2006 Harvard study, autism can cost a family caring for a person with autism \$3 million over the person's lifetime. For taxpayers, autism has an additional direct impact: schools and other public facilities must accommodate the growing population of children with autism. A study by the Special Education Expenditure Project found that school districts could potentially spend upwards of \$75,000 per student with autism in special programs, therapies and other needs to help them learn. At the same time, a Michigan State University

College of Education study found that half the special education instructors in Michigan do not use proven, effective teaching methods and many lack the training to effectively teach students with autism.

“Autism affects all of us, and that’s why we need action now,” said State Representative **Dian Slavens** (D-Canton). “This issue is about supporting our children and helping them manage a devastating disorder so they can care for themselves and succeed in today’s world.”

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