

Autism Thursday in Annapolis

*This is our day to speak on behalf of families in Maryland
who are dealing with the challenges of autism...*

RALLY 2/26/2009

WHAT: Press Conference/Rally/Hearings in support of the Autism Insurance Coverage Bill

WHEN: Thursday February 26th. (Rally from 11:30AM – 1:00PM; Hearings at 1:00PM and 3:00PM)

WHERE: Lawyers Mall

WHO: Attorney General Doug Gansler, Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Delegate Kirill Reznik and hundreds of autism treatment advocates and supporters.

DETAILS: People are urged to meet with their Delegates and Senators beforehand and urge them to vote in favor of this bill

- To find your Delegate and Senators go to <http://mdelect.net> and type in your home address
- Call your legislators office, **let them know that you are a constituent** and that you would like to meet with them regarding **HB 273/SB 394**. If they are unable to meet, make sure that you leave a message that this bill is important to you and you will be watching to see how they will vote on it and try to stop by when you come to Annapolis.

At 11:30, we will be assembling in Lawyer's Mall (see below for details) to assemble for a rally/press conference which will start at 12. Speaking at this rally will be several elected officials, as well as experts and advocates on the issue of Insurance Coverage for autism treatment. The rally/press conference will be over by 12:45. From there we will go into the House of Delegates for bill hearings before the House and Senate committees at **1PM** and **3PM**.

At the hearings, you are asked to stay quiet and respectful of the people testifying whether they are proponents or opponents of the bill. Remember, the committee is the one who will make the decision and it pays to show restraint and respect, even in this emotional time.

SIGNS: Participants are encouraged to bring homemade signs with messages on them such as "Autism Votes", "Vote for HB 273", "Vote for SB 394", "Autism is Treatable. Cover our Kids" or similar simple messages.

BUSES: If you have a group of people who are interested in chartering a bus to attend Autism Thursday, please e-mail Judith Ursitti at judith.ursitti@autismspeaks.org.

Autism Thursday in Annapolis

Directions

From Baltimore and points North:

I-95 South to I-895 South (Harbor Tunnel) to I-97 South or I-95 South to I-695 South (Baltimore Beltway) to Exit 4, I-97 South. I-97 will end at Rt. 50 go East to Exit 24, Rowe Blvd.

From points West and Northwest:

I-70 East to I-695 South (Baltimore Beltway). Follow to Exit 4, I-97 South. I-97 will end at Rt. 50 go East to Exit 24, Rowe Blvd.

From Washington DC (30 miles) and points South:

I-95 North to I-495 North (Washington Beltway) to Rt. 50 East. Follow Rt. 50 to Exit 24, Rowe Blvd.

From points Southwest:

Rt. 66 East to I-495 South to Rt. 50 East. Follow to Exit 24, Rowe Blvd.

From Maryland's Eastern Shore:

Take Rt. 50 West across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge (free westbound). Follow Rt. 50 to exit 24 B, Rowe Blvd.

Parking

Parking is available in a public garage or at the Navy Parking Lot.

To access the Navy Parking Lot. Go straight on Rowe Blvd after exiting US-50. Make a right turn at Taylor Ave and then turn right at Gate #5. Parking is a flat rate of \$5 to be paid upon exiting the lot either by paying to attendant or by using the payment station before entering your vehicle to leave. From the Navy Lot you can take a free shuttle which will drop you off at Lawyers Mall. More info is available at: http://www.pinnacleparking.com/brochure/stadium_park.pdf

Garages:

Gott's Court Garage - 25 Northwest Street, Annapolis, MD 410-263-9749

Follow Rowe Blvd. to a right turn on Calvert Street. Pass the traffic light at Northwest Street. The entrance is on the left off Calvert Street.

Whitmore Garage - 37 Clay Street, Annapolis, MD 410-269-0014

Follow Rowe Blvd. to a right turn on Calvert Street. Pass the traffic light at Northwest Street and right turn onto Clay Street. The entrance is on the left.

Lawyers Mall info

Lawyer's Mall, where most rallies in Annapolis take place, is not quite a mall. Rather, it is an outdoor square in front of the State House between the Department of Legislative Services building and the Governor's House and right across the street from the House of Delegates and the State Senate. It is easily identifiable with a statue of Former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall

ADVOCACY 101

Know who represents you

- To find out who your state representatives are, visit <http://mdelect.net> where you will also find their contact information.

When communicating with a legislator or their staff

- Be specific. Ask your delegate to support **HB 273** and your senator to support **SB 394**. (Copies of the legislation and bill summaries can be found at www.autismvotes.org/maryland.)
- Be polite and positive in all your communications.
- Address representatives as "*Delegate Last Name*" or "*Senator Last Name*."
- Give them the facts and the benefit of your knowledge on the issue and its effect on your family, friends, and community. Personalization of an issue is a powerful tool. **Tell your story.**
- Ask for a commitment. If the legislator needs more information, contact Judith Ursitti at judith.ursitti@autismspeaks.org to coordinate follow up.
- Leave the one-page bill summary with the legislator.
- Remember to say, "thank you." Legislators, just like you, appreciate positive, constructive feedback. Look for opportunities, especially publicly, to give them credit for their efforts.
- After visiting a legislator, please e-mail Judith Ursitti at judith.ursitti@autismspeaks.org with information about the legislator's current position on the legislation.

AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

**House Bill 273 - Sponsored by Delegate Kirill Reznik (D-39)
Senate Bill 394 - Sponsored by Senator Kathy Klausmeier (D-8)**

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 1 in every 150 children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Surgeon General have reported that with essential treatments and services, the vast majority of children with autism spectrum disorder improve.

In the frequent absence of coverage for these evidence-based treatments, families often pay out-of-pocket for treatments. In the process, many risk their homes and the educations of their unaffected children – essentially mortgaging their entire futures.

AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE – COVERAGE OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS:

- Requires insurers, nonprofit health service plans and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder
- Coverage will be provided to individuals under the age of 21
- Coverage under this bill is subject to an inflation adjusted maximum benefit of \$50,000 annually
- Coverage of treatments will be provided when prescribed, provided, or ordered for an individual diagnosed with autism by a licensed physician or a licensed psychologist who determines the care to be medically necessary
- In addition to diagnosis, the bill includes coverage of the following evidence-based treatments:
 - Rehabilitative care
 - Pharmacy care
 - Psychiatric care
 - Psychological care
 - Therapeutic care
 - Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Eight states, including Indiana, South Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Illinois, have recently enacted legislation requiring insurers to cover evidence-based treatments for autism spectrum disorder.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

This legislation includes coverage for Applied Behavior Analysis. What is ABA?

- Applied behavior analysis ("ABA"), an evidence-based behavioral intervention, is the treatment of choice for many children with autism. The intensity of ABA is contingent on the severity of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ABA is neither new nor investigational. The American Academy of Pediatrics has noted its decades-long record of efficacy:

The effectiveness of ABA-based intervention in ASD's [autism spectrum disorders] has been well documented through 5 decades of research by using single-subject methodology and in controlled studies of comprehensive early intensive behavioral intervention programs in university and community settings. Children who receive early intensive behavioral treatment have been shown to make substantial, sustained gains in IQ, language, academic performance, and adaptive behavior as well as some measures of social behavior, and their outcomes have been significantly better than those of children in control groups.

Is ABA Educational?

- ABA addresses the core symptoms of autism, which is a neurobiological disorder commonly diagnosed by developmental pediatricians and pediatric neurologists. It addresses medical issues including speech, nutrition, sleep and personal safety. ABA is crucial in preparing a child to succeed in an educational environment, where it can also be utilized as a learning tool.
- The 2008 Virginia General Assembly's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission Study on Mandated Coverage of Autism Spectrum Disorders states:

*Although the insurance industry often claims that treatment for ASD's, such as ABA-based therapy, are educational and their coverage not appropriate for health insurance, **medical experts disagree and indicate that many treatments are both medical and educational.***

- The increasing number of states adopting comprehensive autism mandates (AZ, TX, PA, SC, FL and IL), Medicaid coverage of ASD-related services, and coverage of these services by the U.S. military health plan (Tri-care) provide further evidence that health insurance coverage of ASD-related services is appropriate.

Will this legislation make insurance premiums increase?

The estimated cost impact is truly minimal.

- The Pennsylvania Insurance Department found that similar legislation would result in a rate impact of at or less than 1%;
- In Arizona, an independent actuary forecasted a cost impact of 0.501%;
- In Louisiana, the consulting actuaries for the Louisiana Office of Group Benefits forecast a cost impact of less than 0.50%;
- Oliver Wyman and Co. has forecasted a rate impact of approximately 0.50% related to similar proposed legislation in the Commonwealth of Virginia.