



**American Academy of Pediatrics, District II, New York State  
Dedicated to the Health of All Children**

**Contact:**

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**Memo of Support  
S. 7000B**

**AN ACT to amend the insurance law, to require health insurance coverage for the  
screening diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders**

The American Academy of Pediatrics, District II, NY representing 6,000 pediatricians across the state and the millions of New York children we care for, enthusiastically supports S.7000B.

This legislation amends Insurance Law to require every health insurance policy in the State of New York to cover the screening, diagnosis and evidence based treatment of autism spectrum disorders. The legislation stipulates that specific New York State Commissioners, responsible for children's health and mental health, promulgate statewide standards which identify evidence based, clinically proven and peer reviewed screening, diagnosis and treatment options for autism and autism spectrum disorders to be covered by all companies providing health insurance coverage in New York

In New York State, the autism rate for children has been increasing by approximately 15% per year. Recent studies have shown that close to 1 in 90 children are affected. Currently, there are 17,000 students age 4 to 21 classified by New York schools as having autism.

Despite research that has shown specific evidence based, intensive behavioral therapies can result in significant improvement in the cognition, communication and functionality of people with autism spectrum disorder evidence based screening, diagnosis and treatment have been excluded from coverage by health insurance carriers here in New York.

Studies have also shown that that health services targeted to address the medical complications and co-morbidities of autism spectrum disorder can significantly improve physical and social functioning of children. These medical services would also be covered under the AAP standards.

If children are denied needed intensive early evidence based psycho/social and medical treatment they will have a lower level of functionality and are much more likely to need life-long support services. Cost analyses show that every dollar spent on early treatment will save \$5 to \$7 in long-term costs.

In the absence of adequate health insurance coverage, the families of those with ASD bear the costs of treatment. Many of them do not have the resources to pay for enormous out-of-pocket treatment and therapy costs which can run as high as \$2,000 to \$4,000 per month. The Autism Society of America estimates that the lifetime cost of caring for a child with autism ranges from \$3.5 to \$5 million. Alternatively, the taxpayers pay these costs through Medicaid and increased demand for highest cost special education services through our schools. Information on the real costs for mandatory autism coverage from Aetna in Texas shows an increase of less than one tenth of one percent. Actuarial analysis of legislation introduced in Massachusetts showed an estimated worst case scenario cost increase of one eighth of one percent per policy holder.

California, Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, Illinois, Montana, Indiana, Louisiana, Oregon, South Carolina and Arizona, all have laws requiring health insurers to cover autism spectrum disorder. Similar legislation is under consideration in many other states. New York needs to join other states and provide coverage to children with autism and autism spectrum disorder. To do less would be shirking our responsibility to provide high quality accessible medical care to all children.