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**Association for
Science in Autism Treatment
PO Box 188
Crosswicks, NJ 08515**

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ASAT Association for Science in Autism Treatment

Providing Accurate, Science-Based Information • Promoting Access To Effective Treatment

June 16, 2010

To The New York Senate Insurance Committee
Re: S7000B (Breslin) / A10372A (Morelle)

An Act to amend the insurance law and the public health law, in relation to coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder.

This measure would expand health insurance coverage for the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. The Association of Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT) supports this bill.

ASAT is a not-for-profit organization of parents and professionals committed to improving the education, treatment, and care of people with autism. Since autism was first identified, there has been a long history of failed treatments and fads, levied on vulnerable individuals as well as on their families. From the scandal of the "refrigerator mother" theory, to the ongoing parade of "miracle cures" and "magical breakthroughs", history has been dominated by improbable theories about causation and treatments. Many of these treatments have been too quickly adopted by professionals, too readily sensationalized by the media, and too hastily embraced by hopeful consumers – well before supporting evidence or reasonable probability existed for their effectiveness or safety. Since ASAT was established in 1998, it has been our goal to work toward adopting higher standards of accountability for the care, education and treatment of all individuals with autism.

Autism is a complex neurobehavioral disorder characterized by impairment in reciprocal social interaction, impairment in communication, and the presence of repetitive and stereotypic patterns of behaviors, interests, and activities. The onset of symptoms is typically before the age of 3 years. The severity of impairment in the given domains as well as the pattern of impairments varies from individual to individual. Impairment in social interaction range from difficulty initiating and maintaining interaction, impaired ability to recognize and experience emotions, and difficulty processing and appreciating the thoughts and feelings of others. Communication deficits range from no useful form of communication to very advanced language abilities, but little ability to use language in a social manner. Repetitive and stereotypic behaviors include perseverative behaviors such as complex rituals, extreme difficulty adapting to change and transition, and unusual movements. Autism is one diagnosis within the larger category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Autism, along with related, but slightly different disorders of Aspergers Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified, constitute the conditions commonly referred to as the Autism Spectrum Disorders. Two rare disorders, Rett Syndrome (a genetic disorder) and Disintegrative Disorder of Childhood are the other currently recognized pervasive developmental disorders. Once thought to be very rare, autism spectrum disorders occur in as many as 1 in 110 people.

Respectfully submitted:

David Celiberti

David Celiberti, Ph.D., BCBA-D
President