



From: **AUTISM SPEAKS**

Rebecca Stelzner
202-955-3114; rshaffer@autismspeaks.org

Rubenstein Communications, Inc.
Adam Pockriss 212-843-8286; APockriss@rubenstein.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUTISM SPEAKS JOINS THE NEVADA AUTISM COMMUNITY
IN APPLAUDING STATE ASSEMBLYMEMBERS FOR PASSING AUTISM
INSURANCE LEGISLATION**

Nevada Assembly Bill 162 Passes in Vote of 39 to 2

NEW YORK, NY (April 21, 2009) -- Autism Speaks today joined Nevada families and other autism advocacy organizations in applauding the members of the State Assembly for passing Assembly Bill 162, which requires insurance companies to provide coverage of evidence-based, medically necessary autism therapies. The bill passed the Nevada Assembly today in a vote of 39-2 and now heads to the State Senate Commerce & Labor Committee for further action.

The Nevada bill requires insurers to cover up to \$36,000 annually for a child with autism under the age of 18 (or under the age of 21 if enrolled in high school) specifically for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, which is recognized as an effective, evidence-based treatment for children with autism. AB 162 was sponsored in the State Assembly by Assemblyman James Ohrenschall (D – Las Vegas).

“Assembly Bill 162 will change children’s lives,” said **Assemblyman Ohrenschall**. “By our actions today in the Nevada Assembly, we are changing the lives of our children for the better.”

“Autism Speaks applauds the members of the Nevada State Assembly for their passing Assembly Bill 162 by an overwhelming majority and extending a helping hand to families that have been financially devastated by the lack of insurance coverage for necessary autism therapies,” said **Elizabeth Emken, Autism Speaks Vice President of Government Relations**. “We now call on the members of the state Senate to follow suit and pass this bill as well, allowing Nevada to join the ranks of states that have recognized the unfair and unreasonable burden being imposed on families of children with autism.”

In many states, insurers explicitly exclude coverage of these therapies from policies, which places a significant financial burden on families seeking to provide their children with necessary services. Ten states – Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas – have passed similar autism insurance reform bills. Twenty-six states have introduced bills this year.

"It is rare for the autism community to secure a win in the battles that we face on a daily basis, but today was most definitely a win for the families here in Nevada," said **Ralph Toddre, Commissioner of the Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders**. "The passage of AB 162 out of the Assembly today is a sure sign that the awareness of autism spectrum disorders and how they affect the families and children in our state is at an all time high."

To learn more about Autism Votes, an initiative of Autism Speaks focused on federal and state legislative advocacy, please visit www.autismvotes.org.

About Autism

Autism is a complex brain disorder that inhibits a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by behavioral challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 150 children in the United States, affecting four times as many boys as girls. The prevalence of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks funds more than \$30 million each year in new autism research, in addition to supporting the Autism Treatment Network, Autism Genetic Resource Exchange, Autism Clinical Trials Network, Autism Tissue Program and a range of other scientific and medical programs. Notable awareness initiatives include the establishment of the annual United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2 and an award-winning, multi-year national public service advertising campaign with the Ad Council. Autism Speaks' family services efforts include the Autism Video Glossary, a 100 Day Kit for newly-diagnosed families, a School Community Tool Kit and the distribution of community grants to local service providers. Its government relations department, through its Autism Votes initiative, has played a critical role in securing federal legislation to advance the federal government's response to autism, and has successfully advocated for insurance reform to require insurers to cover medically-necessary autism therapies. Each year, Autism Speaks Walk Now for Autism fundraising events are held in more than 70 cities across the country, as well as Canada and the United Kingdom.

About the Co-Founders

Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism. Bob Wright is Senior Advisor at Lee Equity Partners and served as vice chairman, General Electric, and chief executive officer of NBC and NBC Universal for more than twenty years. He also serves on the board of directors of the Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation and RAND Corporation. Suzanne Wright has an extensive history of active involvement in community and philanthropic endeavors, mostly directed toward helping children. She serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations and is also Trustee Emeritus of Sarah Lawrence College, her alma mater. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org.

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