

From: **AUTISM SPEAKS**

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**AUTISM SPEAKS JOINS THE NEVADA AUTISM COMMUNITY IN
DENOUNCING ASSEMBLYMAN SETTELMAYER'S VEILED ATTEMPT TO
DISMANTLE SUPPORT FOR AUTISM INSURANCE REFORM BILL**

NEW YORK, NY (April 24, 2009) -- This week, Autism Speaks -- the nation's largest autism advocacy organization -- joined with the Nevada autism community in applauding the members of the State Assembly for passing Assembly Bill 162, a bill requiring insurance companies to provide coverage of evidence-based, medically necessary autism therapies. The bill easily passed the Assembly in a 39-2 vote and now heads to the State Senate Commerce & Labor Committee for further action. However, a single assemblyman has unexpectedly decided to launch an effort to derail the bill's further progress, compelling Autism Speaks and other advocates to decry the legislator's tactics and motive.

Assemblyman James Settelmeyer released a statement on Wednesday entitled "All Children Deserve Autism Coverage." It argues that because AB 162 does not cover all children within the state of Nevada -- specifically, the children of state employees -- the bill does not deserve further support. Until voting yes on AB 162 on the floor of the Assembly on Tuesday, Assemblyman Settelmeyer had been vocal in his opposition to the bill, even voting against it in committee.

"Assemblyman Settelmeyer knows that in this difficult fiscal climate the Nevada legislature is unable to include state employees in this legislation, which necessitated its amendment," said Elizabeth Emken, Autism Speaks Vice President of Government Relations. "As Assembly Settelmeyer is well aware, any attempt to amend AB 162 to add the state plan back in will kill the bill altogether. All Nevada families affected by autism lose in that scenario, but it is clear that his goal is not to help families. His attack on AB 162 is nothing more than a veiled attempt to derail the progress of the bill by confusing his Senate colleagues, betraying the Nevada autism community in the process."

"Assemblyman Settelmeyer claims he wants to see all children with autism, including the children of state employees, enjoy appropriate coverage for the insurance premiums that they pay -- but nobody is buying the sincerity of his rhetoric," said Ralph Toddre, Commissioner of the Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders. "The all or nothing approach he is now advocating is purely a political ploy. If he truly wants to demonstrate genuine concern for Nevada's families, he will recruit his Republican Senate counterparts to vote in favor of this bill and then introduce separate legislation at

a later date amending the law to include state employees once the state's economy has improved."

AB 162 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. The bill was sponsored in the State Assembly by Assemblyman James Ohrenschall (D – Las Vegas).

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.

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