

STATE SENATOR • TUPAC A. HUNTER • 5TH DISTRICT

Hunter Press Release

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SEN. HUNTER AND REPS. ANGERER AND BALL INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE AUTISM INSURANCE COVERAGE

Bill will assure needed health-related services for autistic children

LANSING- LANSING- Sen. Tupac A. Hunter (D-Detroit), Rep. Kathy Angerer (D-Dundee), and Rep. Richard Ball (R-Bennington Twp.) have introduced legislation that would require insurance companies to provide coverage for autism-related services. These services include but are not limited to therapeutic evaluations and interventions, speech, occupational, and physical therapy, intensive early intervention, applied behavioral analysis and therapy.

"As knowledge and awareness increases regarding autism, diagnoses are on the rise," Sen. Hunter said. "This legislation will provide services that are proven to be effective in treating autistic children, with little cost to individual consumer health insurance premiums."

Treatments for autism are difficult to access, often inadequate, and frequently delayed. Without private group health insurance coverage, parents are often forced either to pay out-of-pocket or forego the necessary treatments.

"This legislation will ultimately improve the outcomes for autistic children, which will actually decrease the life-time treatment costs," said Rep. Angerer. "And that will result in overall health insurance savings."

Twenty-five states have either introduced bills to mandate some degree of coverage, or already require some degree of coverage for autism related expenses. Michigan's participation in this effort will mean that the majority of states have now joined this fight.

"Autism is a relatively rare, but extremely debilitating condition that affects over 11,000 school-age children in Michigan," said Rep. Ball. "As an optometrist I have examined these children many of whom are very intelligent, but suffer from extreme communication problems. This package of bills would help provide insurance coverage for diagnosis and treatment, as well as a Michigan income tax check-off box to fund research on autism."

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