

STATE SENATOR • TUPAC A. HUNTER • 5TH DISTRICT

# Hunter Press Release

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## **Hunter Speaks at Autism Awareness Rally, Calls for Action on Insurance Legislation**

*Bills would provide coverage for autism -related services*

LANSING-Yesterday State Senator Tupac A. Hunter (D-Detroit) spoke at a rally at the State Capitol hosted by the advocacy group “Autism Votes Michigan,” calling for action on his legislation that would require health insurance companies to cover critical forms of therapy for children with autism.

“No parent should be forced to choose between what is best for their child medically and what they can afford financially,” said Sen. Hunter. “Right now the insurance companies don’t worry about the quality of life for kids with autism or their families because they don’t have to. Together, with help from the hundreds of parents who attended yesterday’s rally, my legislation will change that.”

Last December, Sen. Hunter introduced Senate Bills 784 and 785, which would require insurance companies to provide coverage for autism-related services. This legislation would give kids with autism access to the treatments they need to live healthy, productive lives without forcing their parents into a dire financial situation like bankruptcy. The State of South Carolina has already passed legislation covering children with autism, and similar measures are currently being considered in Pennsylvania, Colorado and Texas.

A recent study conducted by the Vista Foundation found that the average monthly increase in premiums for an individual policy by adding autism coverage could be as low as \$1.26; and for a family policy, as low as \$3.41. This represents an increase of less than half of 1%. Even using higher impact estimates, the increase will not affect the affordability of insurance for average Michigan policyholders.

“It’s important to remember that children born with autism will eventually grow up to become adults with autism,” said Hunter. “Passing these bills will help reduce our long-term medical expenses by making sure these kids grow up to lead healthy, independent lives.”

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*Sen. Hunter represents the 5th district, which is comprised of northwest Detroit, Dearborn and Inkster. He*

*serves as Minority Vice Chair of the Banking & Financial Institutions and the Homeland Security & Emerging Technologies Committees. He is also a member of the Commerce & Tourism and the Economic Development & Regulatory Reform Committees.*