

STATE SENATOR • TUPAC A. HUNTER • 5TH DISTRICT

# Hunter Press Release

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## **Senator Hunter Introduces Legislation Requiring Insurance Coverage For Autism Treatments**

LANSING- Tupac A. Hunter (D-Detroit) today introduced legislation requiring insurance companies to cover treatments and services related to autism. These services include but are not limited to therapeutic evaluations and interventions, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, intensive early intervention, and applied behavioral analysis and therapy.

"Nearly everyone knows a family that has been affected by autism, and yet these families are still unable to get financial help through their insurance companies for treatments and therapies," said Sen. Hunter. "This legislation will make sure that families have the help they need to provide necessary services and treatments for their autistic child."

Without private group health insurance coverage, many families find it nearly impossible to get their child into an effective treatment program quickly. Too many parents have been forced to pay for treatments out of their own pocket, and many simply cannot afford these necessary treatments. Senator Hunter's legislation would make treatment programs more accessible to parents and their child early in their diagnosis. This will improve a child's chance to reach their full potential and so decrease the long-term treatment costs.

"Families should not have to face autism alone, and this common sense-legislation will give them the assistance they need that could ultimately save money for health insurers," said Hunter. "These families are willing to pay for insurance to cover autism treatments, and it is time that we join the other states that have passed similar legislation and give these parents this option."

According to the National Council of State Legislatures, eight states have enacted legislation in the last two years to require insurance companies to cover autism treatments. Those states are: Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas. Missouri is the latest state to consider this legislation with House and Senate committees both acting on bills mandating childhood autism coverage.

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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.*