

Assemblyman Koon Advocates for Individuals with Autism

The entire month of April has been designated "Autism Awareness" month. As quoted from the Autism Speaks Website, "It's time to shine a light on Autism, to awaken public understanding of the crisis, and to accelerate support for research and services."

Autism is a developmental disability that affects millions of people worldwide; an estimated one out of 150 children is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and 1 in 94 boys is likely to be diagnosed with the disorder making it more prevalent among boys.

During the month of April we need to think about what we as a community can do to help the families who are dealing with this Autism crisis. In particular, the legislature, needs to step in and start to explore legislative opportunities that could improve the quality of life for all individuals with Autism. Families that cope with this condition are already faced with difficult physical and emotional hurdles—they shouldn't have to worry about how they will pay for their child's treatment. That's why I've introduced legislation to expand health insurance coverage for the treatment and diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders in people under the age of 29. This measure would require insurance companies to cover Autism diagnosis and treatment up to \$36,000. [Click Here To Read Bill A.6888.](#)

This legislation is a promising step forward for Autism advocacy, but there is still much to be done. I've always considered myself an advocate for child rights and I've made it my business, to learn about what families go through when it comes to making sure that children with Autism get what they need. I have had the wonderful opportunity of serving on the local board of UNYFEAT, Inc. (Upstate New York Families for Effective Autism Treatment, Inc.) in which I've been able to get feedback from families all over the Greater Rochester area about what their needs and challenges are. I will continue to advocate on behalf of all families and care givers helping children and adults with Autism. Currently, I am working with Autism Advocacy groups state wide, to find out what the needs of children and adults with ASD are and how they can be met.

We are dawning on a new age of hope for those families and individuals dealing with Autism. Local, state and national attention is being focused on what can be done in terms of education, health care and research pertaining to Autism Spectrum Disorders. The introduction of this Autism insurance coverage legislation is what I hope will be the first of many steps that the legislature will take in helping to make sure that children with Autism are getting all the support they need.