

6240



February 10, 2009

Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Shannon Knall and I am the Autism Speaks Advocacy Chair for Connecticut, and most importantly mother to an 8 year old with autism. I regret that I am not able to testify in person, but urge your strong support of House Bill 6240, An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Prescription Drugs for Persons with autism.

By definition, autism is " a neurological disorder that impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe."

Imagine you are a person with autism with these symptoms. Imagine sitting in a classroom trying desperately to learn about your favorite subject, but you can't. Because your language may be impaired, or your ability to understand appropriate social behavior is severely delayed you have a tantrum. Screaming uncontrollably, falling to the floor kicking and screaming out of complete frustration. Now imagine that there might be a medication to help you minimize these symptoms, but you don't have access to it. Imagine you're a parent of a child with autism who cannot afford to pay for these medications, not covered by insurance, and the crushing guilt you feel not being able to help your child.

This is not a fantasy. This is a reality for hundreds of Connecticut families. These are families who PAY insurance premiums, who HAVE insurance, but yet are denied coverage simply because their child has autism.

Unfortunately, autism has been ignored for so long that there is not yet a cure for it, or a silver bullet for treatment. Parents are willing to try anything and everything to reclaim their children, and help them to realize their potential. Denying these people, who pay insurance premiums, access to treatment for

their loved ones is discriminatory and the state of Connecticut must stand up for them, for the thousands impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Please lend your support to our families and pass House Bill 6240.

Thank you.

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