

*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*



*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

MISSOURI SENATE
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Senate Says “Yes” to Insurance Coverage for Autism
Bill Sponsored by Sens. Rupp and Schmitt
Secures Insurance for Autism-Related Services

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri families with children on the autism spectrum are one step closer to being guaranteed that health carriers will provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. The Missouri Senate gave first-round approval today to the measure, [Senate Bill 618](#), sponsored by Sen. Scott T. Rupp, R-St. Charles County, and co-sponsored by Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Glendale. Rupp noted autism is the only disorder out of the top 10 childhood neurobiological disorders that is not covered by health insurance.

“It is an issue of fairness – there should not be “have” and “have-nots” when it comes to treatments for kids living with autism,” Rupp said. “By passing this bill, we will be providing real help and relief.”

The bill would require most health carriers that issue or renew health benefit plans to provide coverage for diagnosis and treatment of individuals up to age 21. It would restrict health carriers from refusing to issue or renew coverage based solely on an autism diagnosis. The proposed insurance coverage would include a physician or psychiatrist’s referral of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) therapy — up to \$55,000 per year for individuals under the age of 21.

Senate Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, said early diagnosis and intervention is reported as the key to making sure children on the spectrum can have the best quality of life possible.

“We have worked to make prevention and early diagnosis a cornerstone of healthcare in Missouri,” Shields said. “By passing this bill, we are making sure the same is true for these children.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism strikes one out of 91 children in this country — more than AIDS, juvenile diabetes and cancer, combined.

Schmitt spoke on the bill sharing his family’s personal experiences with his 5-year-old son, Stephen, who falls on the spectrum and is non-verbal.

“Children who live on the autism spectrum deal with so many challenges each and every day,” Schmitt said. “These proven therapies are the difference between whether a family can go to a restaurant without having to leave early, the difference between a child having meaningful friendships. We owe it to these families to give their children the opportunity to reach their full potential. Put simply, this bill is the right thing to do and the right time to do it.”

The Senate advanced a similar bill last year that later stalled in the House. It now needs a final Senate vote before moving to the House.

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