

*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 Securing Insurance for Autism-Related Services Advances

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri families with children on the autism spectrum disorder 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 voted 26-6 today to advance [Senate Bill 618](#) to the House for similar consideration, sponsored by Sen. Scott T. Rupp, R-St. Charles County, and co-sponsored by Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Glendale.

Senator Rupp noted autism is the only disorder out of the top 10 childhood neurobiological disorders that is not covered by health insurance.

“It’s been a long road to get to this point. This is an important day for Missouri families that struggle with autism,” said Sen. Rupp. “The legislation that the Senate approved today is fair for everyone, and most importantly, it gets families the help they need.”

The bill would require most health carriers that issue or renew health benefit plans to provide coverage for diagnosis and treatment of individuals with autism. It would restrict health carriers from refusing to issue or renew coverage based solely on the fact of 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 health care in Missouri,” Sen. 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.

Senator Schmitt has been a strong supporter working to advance the legislation. He has also shared his family’s personal experiences with his young son, Stephen, who falls on the autism spectrum.

“Children 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.

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