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Governor M. Jodi Rell
Executive Office of the Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
Re: Autism Health Insurance Parity Law

Dear Governor Rell,

My wife and I cheered as we discovered that not long ago New York Governor Pataki signed the Autism Health Insurance Parity Law. As I'm sure you know, this bill requires Health Insurance companies regulated by the State of New York to offer the same health care procedures to people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder that would be provided to people with other diagnoses. The bill will help correct the long-standing practice by health insurers of denying necessary health care to people with autism.

The bill also defines Autism Spectrum Disorders as "neurobiological disorders." This definition is important because some health insurance companies have claimed that autism is a mental health disorder and therefore not covered. Details of the bill signing can be found here:
http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/02/july31_3_02.htm.

The importance of bringing this requirement to Connecticut and the rest of the country cannot be emphasized enough. For too long Health Insurance companies have ducked their responsibilities when it comes to Autism Spectrum Disorder, finding any technicality or loophole to deny coverage. Intervention during the first 4-5 years is critical for the development of an autistic child, and during this time too many parents rely on understaffed state-based programs or are forced to scrounge to pay out of pocket for intervention services.

We have been denied coverage time and time again for physician-recommended treatment for our 2 ½ year old autistic son. The denial letters all begin the same way: "We have received your claim regarding.... But unfortunately, as stated in your Membership Materials Packet, this claim does not meet the criteria..." (we usually put the letters down at that point, no need to read any further).

But it is not the intent of this letter to "rat out" our health insurance provider, to try and gather funds for our cause, or to make some broad statement about the deplorable state of U.S. healthcare. Put simply we feel it's about doing what is right. Enough with the loopholes and the "denials by definition," it's time for Health Insurance companies to deliver the services they claim to offer.

We thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Respectfully,



Jesse D. Leo