



DARRELL STEINBERG
President Pro Tempore, 6th Senate District
Chair, Senate Select Committee on Autism and Related Disorders

January 25, 2010

Dear Senator Steinberg,

We are writing to you to express our most urgent request that you introduce and carry an autism insurance mandate clarification bill this legislative session. Given the fiscal crisis faced by California and the autism epidemic that grows larger with every passing day, our great state can wait no longer to require health plans and insurers to pay their fare share of autism treatment and stop shifting costs to the public sector. The state currently spends hundreds of millions of dollars every year on medically necessary treatment for individuals with autism which legally and morally is already the responsibility of the health insurance industry. And thousands of children and adults with autism go without treatment, which is unconscionable since there are now many evidence-based treatments for autism.

Our organization, Alliance of California Autism Organizations (ACAO), is comprised of more than 40 autism organizations throughout the state, and we are certain that we speak for the autism community about this issue. Insurance reform is our organization's top legislative priority for 2010. We are seeking meaningful health insurance reform that ends discrimination against individuals with autism and provides the health coverage that our families pay for and do not receive.

We applaud your excellent record of leadership in the autism arena – including Chairing the Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, Forming and Chairing the Senate Select Committee on Autism and the carrying numerous bills over the years that have helped our community. You are the ideal person to take the leadership on this essential bill. There is no way you could do more to help California families struggling with autism.

There are few legislative opportunities that can make such a meaningful impact on the lives of some of the most needy Californians and save the state hundreds of millions of dollars in the process. We believe this issue has the unique opportunity to unite a wide and disparate group of constituents, including the autism community, regional centers, school districts, teachers, health care providers, and taxpayers. Our community is energized about this opportunity and we are committed to delivering the grass roots support needed to pass this important piece of legislation.

Please review the position paper we have prepared as to the innumerable reasons you should introduce this legislation now. Please contact Kristin Jacobson at 650-759-5737 or kjacobson5@yahoo.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

Greg Fletcher
ACAO Representative

ASA–Autism Society of America
ASA-CA / Autism Society of California
ASA-Coachella Valley Chapter
ASA–Greater Long Beach/San Gabriel Valley Chapter
ASA–Inland Empire Chapter
ASA–Los Angeles Chapter
ASA–San Diego County Chapter
ASA–Santa Barbara Chapter
ASA–San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
ASA–Ventura County Chapter
ASD Insurance Help
Autism Action Network
Autism Awareness Assoc–UC Davis
Autism Education Network
Autism Speaks–Bay Area
Autism Speaks–Los Angeles
Autism Speaks–Orange County
Autism Speaks–San Diego
Autism Speaks–Sacramento
Burlingame Mothers for Special Kids
California Autism Foundation
California Parents Association of America
California Disability Community Action Network
FEAT– Los Angeles
FEAT–Sacramento
FEAT–Fresno-Madera Counties
Friends of Children with Special Needs
Friends of The Bay School
Goh Foundation
K.E.N. Project
Kaiser Spectrum Kids
LIA Foundation
NAA–National Autism Association
Parents Helping Parents
Sacramento Asperger Syndrome Info & Support
Sacramento BioMed
Schafer Autism Report
Santa Clarita Autism Asperger Network
Solano FEAT
Special Needs Advocates for Understanding
TACA–Talk About Curing Autism
Unlocking Autism