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ANNETTE KELLY
Mrs. MICHIGAN
UNITED STATES 2011



39889 Coronation Drive
Canton, MI 48188-1526
248-667-9384

mrsmichiganunitedstates@yahoo.com

March 1, 2012

The Honorable Jim Marleau
Chairman, Senate Health Policy Committee
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Chairman Marleau:

First, I thank you along with Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville, Lt. Governor Brian Calley, Senator Mike Green and Senator Tupac Hunter for working together and helping to affect positive change in our insurance code. It is my hope that your colleagues in the Senate and in the House will join in this effort by voting in support of SB 414, SB 415 and SB 981, legislation that would require insurance coverage for Autism related treatments that are evidence based.

I write as a voice for the families and children who are struggling daily to simply provide the basic needs and medical treatments for their loved one living with Autism.

Ask any mother what her biggest fear is, and most would say 'not being able to provide care for her children; especially when the child is in need of medical attention.' My husband and I faced this fear head on when our sons were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders as Michigan does not currently offer medical insurance coverage for Autism treatments.

Our sons were both diagnosed at Mott Children's Hospital by a neurologist. We were told that early intervention is key in helping our children lead productive lives. We were told that many children improve greatly with proper interventions including: Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Applied Behavioral Analysis Therapy. Great, we thought, we will start right away. Like all parents, we wanted to do everything in our power to help our sons.

After receiving the shock of a diagnosis of Autism we were crushed once again. We soon found out that Michigan does not offer health care coverage for Autism diagnosis. We went to the school district, but quite frankly, asking a special education department that is often smothered in red tape, bureaucracy and budget constraints to provide medical intervention for our children was laughable at best. It would be neglectful for me, as a parent, to expect a school district to prescribe appropriate neurological disorder medical interventions for my children. I know of no other medical diagnosis that looks to a school district for tier one medical interventions.

Turning our back on our children was not an option so we paid for services out of pocket. The costs were so far beyond our reach that we realized selling our home and downsizing was the only choice. This would relieve us from so much medical debt that we had fallen into, but what lies in the future for our children? Medical coverage still is not available in Michigan. Should we look at moving to one of the 29 states that offer Autism insurance coverage or let our children drift away each day into a deeper world of Autism? The latter was not acceptable.

However, luck came our way when my husband learned of a new benefit only his company (DTE Energy) offered for families who have children with Autism. DTE recently put into place a complete medical coverage program for employees who have children with Autism. Since then, my younger son began receiving services of Applied Behavioral Analysis that were never within our financial reach before the coverage. His gains and level of improvement are absolutely amazing.

While I am thrilled that our boys will get services they need due to the benefits through DTE, my heart aches for the 15,000 plus children in our state who are not receiving the medical intervention that is so necessary. How many more Michigan families need to lose their home simply to provide medical care for their children suffering from Autism?

The solution is so simple. You and your colleagues can make a difference today by voting in favor of Senate Bills 414, 415, and 981. I can imagine no greater fulfillment as an elected official than to know you directly changed thousands of lives by making medically necessary treatments available.

Hopefully,



Annette Hohl Kelly
Mom of two boys with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Mrs. Michigan U.S. 2011

cc: The Honorable Randy Richardville, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health Policy Committee
The Honorable Mike Green, State Senator
The Honorable Tupac Hunter, State Senator
The Honorable Brian Calley, Lt. Governor
David Meador, EVP/CFO of DTE