

Testimony of Angelique Layton, President of Autism Society of America, Boulder Chapter to Colorado State Senate Health and Human Services March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Good morning Senators, Thank you for taking the time to listen to public testimony regarding this important bill.

Although I have testified before as an individual on other matters, I come before you today as the President of the Autism Society of America, Boulder Chapter. We are an 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders. We are part of the national organization which serves hundreds of thousands of families. Our chapter regularly touches the lives of over 900 families each month.

We provide educational services, support groups, and other assistance including respite care to individuals and families affected with autism spectrum disorders.

One of the most difficult challenges that our families deal with after receiving a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder is negotiating with their insurance companies regarding coverage for this disease.

When parents receive a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, they are often overwhelmed and unprepared to deal with the difficult task of obtaining coverage for their child or family member from their insurance plan. Insurance plans are often reluctant to assist families in determining their eligibility for services and are quick to deny coverage. Families that are already financially taxed by the diagnosis are doubly taxed by the burden of dealing with their insurance providers.

This legislation will clarify the rules for insurance companies and families and make it easier to predict and obtain insurance benefits for families who need services.

There is evidence that the expense of early intervention and treatment of this debilitating disease results in improved outcomes as the individual ages. Intensive therapies for this disease have in many cases resulted in cures for the diagnosed individual. This legislation will allow more families to access and obtain necessary medical treatment for their children and family members.

The Autism Society of America Boulder Chapter urges you to vote in favor of this important bill.