



March 7, 2011

The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable John C. Astle
Vice-Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill (SB) 759—Support

Dear Chairman Middleton and Vice-Chairman Astle:

On behalf of Children's National Medical Center (Children's National,) I am pleased to support Senate Bill (SB) 759, "Health Insurance - Coverage for Autism Spectrum Disorders". Children's National commends Senator Katherine Klausmeier for her leadership in introducing this bill, which would require insurers to provide coverage for the diagnosis of and treatment for autism spectrum disorders.

With 283 beds, more than 1,330 nurses, and 550 physicians, Children's National Medical Center is the only exclusive provider of pediatric care in the Greater Washington metropolitan region. With six outpatient centers, five primary care practices servicing eight Maryland locations, and specialty care services provided in eight Maryland locations, Children's National is proud to be one of the largest providers of high quality pediatric primary, specialty and emergency care to Maryland's children and families.

Children's National's Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders treats approximately 400 children annually with these complex, developmental neurological disorders. Pediatric neuropsychologists treat these children at both the main hospital and at the outpatient center in Rockville. The Center also has developed a postdoctoral residency program by which future pediatric neuropsychologists will participate in clinical rotations treating autistic children; as well as learn about and participate in autism research projects in which Children's National pediatric neuropsychologists participate.

Children's National supports HB 783 because it will help to improve access to critical treatments for children in Maryland with autism spectrum disorders. Children with autism have substantial medical needs and often have a difficult time accessing necessary treatments through private health insurance. Our experience caring for both insured and uninsured children finds that families who are unable to find insurance coverage have children with more severe conditions resulting from autism spectrum disorders. These families are also more likely to incur higher health care costs from lack of access to timely care.

There are other costs to children, families, and society as a result of lack of access to necessary health care. While in the first 22 years of life, indirect costs are mostly associated with lost productivity for the parents of a child with autism, studies show that the costs from age 23 on are associated with lost productivity of the individual with autism. The impact of this lost productivity can have enormous

ramifications for the tax base of an entire society and the future of the older generation as their children with autism transition into adult care.

Several studies have shown that as many as 47 percent of the children that undergo early intensive behavioral therapies achieve higher education placement and increased IQ levels. HB 783 will help to ensure that children have timely access to appropriate care.

Children's National Medical Center urges a favorable report to SB 759. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Tim Jones, Director of State Government Affairs, by e-mail at tjones@cnmc.org or by phone at (202) 471-4802. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kenworthy, Ph.D.
Pediatric Neuropsychologist
Director, Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders
Division of Pediatric Neuropsychology