



March 24, 2010

Councilmember Muriel Bowser  
Chairperson  
Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 6  
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Bill 18-0528—Support

Dear Chairperson Bowser:

On behalf of Children's National Medical Center, I am pleased to support Bill 18-0528, the "Health Insurance for Children with Autism Act of 2009." Children's National commends Councilmembers Tommy Wells, Muriel Bowser and David Catania for their leadership in introducing this bill, which would require health care insurers to provide coverage for the diagnosis and evidence-based, medically necessary treatment - including applied behavior analysis - of autism spectrum disorders.

Children's National Medical Center, a 283 bed not-for-profit academic medical center located at 111 Michigan Avenue, NW, has provided hope to sick children and their families for more than 140 years. With Children's Hospital, seven primary care facilities, one outpatient center, two facilities providing specialty care services, and two pediatric practices located in the District of Columbia, Children's National is proud to provide convenient, high quality pediatric primary, specialty and emergency care to the District's children and families.

Children's National's Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders provides evaluation and treatment services for children with autism and related disorders. It addresses the needs of all children with autism spectrum disorders and specializes in the diagnosis and evaluation of children with primary deficits in social cognition, communication, and executive functioning, including planning/organization, and flexibility skills.

The Center treats approximately 500 children annually and has a variety of training programs, including a postdoctoral residency program by which future pediatric neuropsychologists and psychologists participate in clinical rotations treating autistic children. Our trainees also participate in autism research and a Leadership in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Autism Supplement program, which provides training in early identification and treatment of autism for a wide range of health practitioners. The Center is also actively involved in advocacy and research.

Children's National supports Bill 18-0528 because it will help to improve access to critical treatments for children in the District 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 underinsured 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. Bill 18-0528 will help to ensure that children have timely access to appropriate care.

Children's National Medical Center urges passage of Bill 18-0528. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Tim Jones, Manager of State Government Affairs, by e-mail at [ttjones@cnmc.org](mailto:ttjones@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

CC: Members of the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs  
Councilmember Tommy Wells  
Councilmember David Catania