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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Members of the House of Representatives

FROM: Rep. Joseph F. Markosek

DATE: September 20, 2012

SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship of Legislation: Maintaining Autism Diagnosis

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation amending the current law that requires health insurance providers to cover the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. The current law, section 635.2 of the Insurance Company Law of 1921, was enacted in 2008.

The criteria for diagnosing autism spectrum disorders are set forth in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (the DSM), which is published by the American Psychiatric Association. The current version, the DSM-IV was first published in 1994 and was revised in 2000. The next version, the DSM-V will be published in May 2013.

The DSM-V will revise the definition of "autism spectrum disorders." The final definition has not been released, but the draft definition caused some concern in the autism community regarding whether individuals who were diagnosed under the DSM-IV would retain their diagnosis under the DSM-V.

The state of Illinois recently amended its law mandating health coverage of the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders to ensure that individuals diagnosed under the DSM-IV remain covered for services under the DSM-V. I believe that Pennsylvania should offer the same protection to individuals with autism here. It is important that these individuals maintain continuity of services in order to maintain or improve their levels of functioning.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation ensuring continuity of treatment services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, please contact Christa Vinson in my office at cvinson@hacd.net or at 717-783-1540.