

Bill requiring autism care coverage advances



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The state legislature is one step closer to making it mandatory for insurers to provide coverage for autism behavioral analysis therapy.

On Wednesday, the House Insurance Committee approved a bill – HB284 – to make this a reality.

The bill is headed to the House for a full vote.

During Wednesday’s session, the committee made some changes to the bill, which included making the Alabama Medicaid Agency cover low-income families with autistic children who need behavioral therapy.

The committee also added caps on increases in coverage and premium costs.

Meridianville’s Rep. Jim Patterson sponsored the bill.

The purpose of behavioral analysis is to help autistic children with their social and educational skills.

Currently, Alabama is one of only a few states that do not require this service by insurance companies.

House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels issued a statement, “I am ecstatic that all children, regardless of their parents’ income, will not have access to these essential basic services. Autism does not discriminate and neither should we. I would like to thank my colleagues who supported this amendment and legislation, Rep. Jim Patterson for accepting the amendment and all the advocates who have worked so hard on this, especially those at All Kids. I look forward to a full vote on this important issue.”

South Central Alabama Mental Health said they serve some children on the autism spectrum.

They released the following Thursday afternoon.

“South Central Alabama Mental Health supports the expansion of funding and services for autism and other mental health related services. We will continue to watch the progress of this amendment as it moves through the legislative process and anticipate follow-up information and direction for Medicaid and the Department of Mental Health. Our Interim Executive Director, Tommy Wright, LICSW serves on the legislative committee with the Department of Mental Health and should receive additional feedback at a meeting of that committee in May.”

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