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AL lawmakers push for more insurance coverage for Autism

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By WBRC Staff CONNECT

TUSCALOOSA, AL (WBRC) - State lawmakers are pushing a new law to require insurance companies to offer more coverage for children with autism.

Currently, Alabama is one of seven states that does not require insurance agencies to cover therapy for autistic children.

The Arts and Autism program director says for parents the stress of having to pay for the service is financially and emotionally crippling.

"I'm the mother of an autistic daughter and she's 22 years old now. But when she was young, I had to pay the equivalent of three mortgages in order to keep her in intervention," Patricia Thomas said.

For that reason, Thomas felt inspired to work for Arts and Autism a non-profit facility that provides hands-on activities for autistic children through art.

Parents like Carol Hutchinson say they depend on free programs like this since they can't afford to pay for autistic services without help. She wants state legislatures and insurance companies to invest in all children.

"This is their lives. Our future, our children's future, we need to pass it," Hutchinson said.

Thomas said it will cost a lot more money over a lifetime to support an autistic adult who might never become productive without early intervention as a child.

Since insurance companies don't have to cover certain specialized services now, Arts and Autism can't contract speech or occupational therapists for their students.

"Provide services to our children, not just children with autism but all the children, as long as these peoples cannot stay here and make a living," Hutchinson said. "They have to go to other states. Let's make it friendly for them, let's bring them over here and let's make Alabama grow."

Representative Jim Patterson is the one pushing the Autism bill and says you should email or call your local lawmaker if you are in favor of it. Copyright 2017 WBRC. All rights reserved.

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