



Big strides made in Autism education in just one year

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By Hannah Ward, Reporter

BIRMINGHAM, AL (WBRC) - Monday is World Autism Day--and this year Alabama parents are grateful to mark this day with new hopes for autistic children in our state.

The passing of this bill opened several doors for families with autistic children.

Almost one year ago, Governor Ivey signed House bill 284 requiring insurance companies to cover treatment for Autistic children.

Parents say this has changed their life not only financially but emotionally.

Stephanie Holland has a son with autism and has become an advocate for autism education.

"When you finally get the help, you see your kid have friends and you see your kid smile. You can take your kid out in public," she explains.

Holland says now she can't imagine what her future would be like without her son receiving this necessary therapy. "They can't talk or communicate with you. All they do is scream and bang their head against the wall. So, you become very isolated as a parent and extremely depressed," she describes.

A lot of parents she knows simply could not afford the treatment their child needed because it cost six-thousand dollars a month. And some families said they could only afford two days a week.

"They were living off of their credit cards and just the stress of that financial hold that it had over them, I saw people sell their homes," Holland recalls.

Now those families have hope again. Holland says for her son, going everyday to therapy broke his chains of silence.

"He now talks, has conversations with me, is able to communicate and I always said that if he could just talk to me and I could talk to him back and him understand everything would be ok. The biggest change I have seen though is that Jack is happy," she states.

Families still pay a co-pay every day that their child goes to therapy but that price tag is much less than what it was before this bill.

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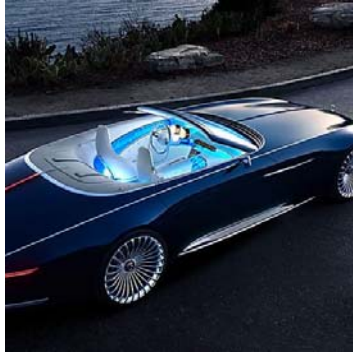
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