

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2764

Chairman Schultz, members of the committee, I've been in strong support of HB 2764, and I wish we all were at Docking at this time, because a KU professor is making a presentation on the outcome of timely intervention on a severely autistic little three-year-old boy. Seeing that would save me a lot of commentary and eloquence. I'll not focus on a lot of statistics – I brought them with me, but on what happened to that little boy. He spent his time rolled up in a fetal position, screamed when touched, and he was totally noncommunicative. Through careful long-term (15 hours/week or more) therapy, he demonstrated that while autism is not curable, it is treatable. At the age of 7, he was doing well in school, and he was not in need of being enrolled in special education. The estimate is that 50 percent of autistic kids, treated appropriately and in a timely fashion, can become nearly fully-functioning, employable adults. Another 25 percent will improve enough to go to school following an IEP. The rest, unfortunately, cannot be helped.

Looking at the improvement in the quality of life of the child and the relief of burden on the family, one has to be amazed and gratified, but more importantly, for those considering the cost of treatment and potential outcomes, this is a win-win situation in the truest sense of the phrase. Paying some money now will save hundreds of thousands if we can prevent even one child from being institutionalized--and we can do 50 percent--you can figure out the long-term cost savings.

There is some question on whether this bill is a mandate. Wrong question. This was settled in 2009 when we passed this bill, but only for kids of state employees. Now, the question is, should the rest of the population be covered. The cost is minimal, spread over the 700,000 insurance contracts, it comes to 14 cents per month. Considering the benefits, this seems a most compelling argument; how can we deny these children a life? If we find the cure for cancer, are we going to refuse insurance coverage regardless of cost? Our society, like any civilized society, must be judged by how it takes care of weakest, most needy members. These children fall into that category; let's do what is right.

Representative Mike Kiegerl