

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Military Retirement Shouldn't End Autism Coverage

Become an original co-sponsor of the bipartisan Moran/Miller legislation before September 16

September 9, 2008

Dear Colleague:

Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one in 150 children the age of 8 are afflicted with autism, a disease characterized by impaired social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and unusual, repetitive, or severely limited activities and interests. Though there is no known cause for autism, the prevalence of this disorder has risen dramatically among America's children.

As a way to support military families affected by autism, the Department of Defense (DoD) introduced the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program to offer coverage for Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), an effective treatment for the symptoms of autism. The new benefit provides up to \$2,500 per month with a maximum of \$30,000 per year for this important therapy.

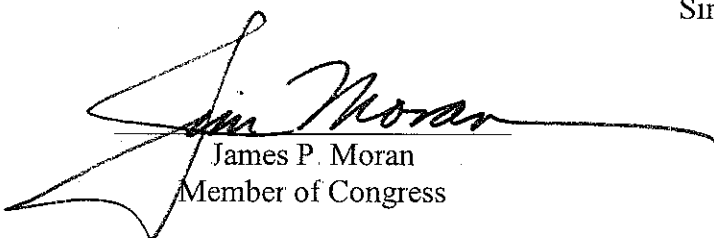
According to a Harvard School of Public Health report, without effective intervention, approximately 90% of individuals with ASD require lifelong care, which costs an estimated \$3.2 million over a child's lifetime. ABA therapy has been shown to be effective in reducing this figure to less than 50% and reducing the costs of lifelong care by two-thirds.

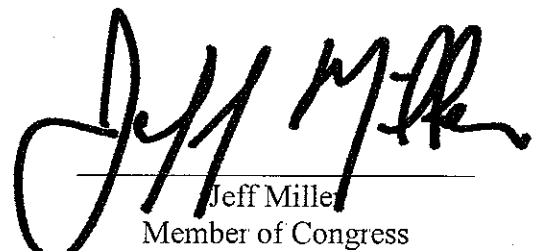
Unfortunately, by law, the ECHO benefit is not made available to military retirees enrolled in TRICARE. One day a soldier's family has ECHO coverage, but all can be lost overnight due to a retirement, either forced or voluntary.

Congressmen Jim Moran (D-VA) and Jeff Miller (R-FL) are introducing legislation to provide our nation's military retirees with the exact same ECHO coverage for their dependent children. Today, DoD estimates that there are 8,784 retirees with dependants diagnosed with autism or a related disorder. These families rely on their TRICARE coverage to provide the resources to support ABA therapy, which can be too expensive to afford without this benefit.

Please join Representatives Moran and Miller on this bipartisan effort to provide ECHO coverage to military retirees. To become an original co-sponsor or to request further information, please contact Heath Bumgardner (heath.bumgardner@mail.house.gov) in Congressman Moran's office at x54376, or Brian Sitler (brian.sitler@mail.house.gov) in Congressman Miller's office at x54136.

Sincerely,


James P. Moran
Member of Congress


Jeff Miller
Member of Congress