

Good morning. My name is Tom Flynn, I live in Etters, York County, and I am the proud father of a young man with autism. His future, and the future of many other young people like him across the state, is what brings me here today.

My son is 24 and considered higher functioning on the scale of Autism Spectrum Disorder. He lives at home with my wife and me, and we are blessed that he has a job. We are able to meet his needs and plan to do so for the foreseeable future.

When he was officially diagnosed with autism at age 5, our son's doctor informed us that the prevalence of an autism diagnosis was 1 in 10,000. Today, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence is now 1 in 68. So our son and many more of his peers are at "the tip of the spear."

Pennsylvania's Bureau of Autism Services is aware of the overwhelming need but lacks the resources to handle it. According to recent figures available on the PA Waiting List Campaign website, a total of 1,989 people were on the interest lists for the adult waivers available through the bureau.

In the 2016-17 budget proposal, the Department of Human Services has planned to fund 100 new spots in the adult autism waiver.

However, according to the 2014 Autism Census Update commissioned by the bureau, 55,000 people with autism in Pennsylvania are receiving some sort of services – but as many as 130,000 more, using the state census figures and the 1 in 68 CDC prevalence rate, are not receiving services.

Further, the 2014 census update projects a doubling of adults with autism – from 17,075 in 2015 to 36,261 by 2020 – who will receive some sort of state services.

So what are we to do? Our state is a national leader when it comes its commitment to autism services. We know we are at the edge of a storm of adults who have already transitioned out, or will transition out, of school-based services. We have an interest list that will grow exponentially.

Fortunately, the commonwealth does have a way to address these critical needs. The Autism Insurance Act, commonly referred to as Act 62, was passed in 2008. Act 62 requires many private insurers to cover many of the costs of treating children under age 21 with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Unfortunately, Act 62 enforcement has been exceedingly rare. The real-life result is that services that should be covered under private insurance instead are paid by Medical Assistance at a practical loss of millions of dollars to the state.

David Gates, a senior attorney with the Pennsylvania Health Law Project, estimated that in 2012, the Department of Human Services (then Department of Public

Welfare) could save \$25 million annually if Act 62 was fully implemented as intended.

By comparison, the budget request for fiscal year 2016-17 for the Bureau of Autism Services is \$24 million.

By directing the savings of Medical Assistance funds from Act 62 implementation to the Bureau of Autism Services, the Commonwealth can help those in need of adult autism services at a time when the demand will be intense, and the Commonwealth can answer that demand with a funding stream already in place.

As a member of the autism community, I ask for your support. DHS Secretary Ted Dallas has said members of his department will be meeting with counterparts of the Insurance Department and representatives of private insurers. We ask for your support for Secretary Dallas' initiative to secure Act 62 implementation, that a law already on the books is enforced and that the resulting savings in Medical Assistance funds are directed to autism services.

Such a commitment will help my son, and so many like him, who have autism but will need the assistance and promise offered by the Commonwealth, through the Bureau of Autism Services, to lead a productive life.

Thank you.