



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COUNCIL MEMBER MARK S. WEPRIN

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CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ADVOCATES CALL FOR THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDS TO THE COUNCIL AUTISM INITIATIVE

Council Member Mark Weprin (D-Oakland Gardens) joined colleagues, autism service providers, and families of children with autism on the steps of City Hall to urge the continuation and expansion of the Council Autism Initiative, which provides autism services to children and families.

"We are seeing a rise in the number of children being diagnosed with some form of autism as they get older, and recent studies indicate that two million children in America have developed autism spectrum disorder. This means parents are more aware, and we need to ensure that families receive quality care and services," said Council Member Weprin.

The Council Autism Initiative provides social and recreational services that create a safe haven for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. These services give caretakers peace of mind when they go to work with the knowledge that their children are protected and receiving appropriate care.

"As a member of the City Council's Health Committee, I am very concerned about the current lack of accessibility to resources that parents and children living with autism face; I am proud to support the Autism Initiative and look forward to working with my colleagues in government to secure funding for it. By doing so, we will enable countless families to have the additional support they need for medical costs, behavioral intervention and other essential resources," said Council Member Julissa Ferreras.

"Children on the autism spectrum are capable of great heights and, with proper care and attention, can lead remarkable lives. Thanks to the city's Autism Initiative, thousands have made great strides and improved their quality of life. As someone who grew up with Tourette's syndrome and ADHD, I deeply appreciate the value of programs like this and the opportunities they provide to children with so much to give. As long as I am in public service, I will continue to help champion causes like the Autism Initiative," said Council Member Jumaane Williams.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in addition to medical costs, intensive behavioral interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder cost \$40,000

to \$60,000 per child per year. Quality resources for the autism community are often inaccessible; budgets have been slashed, service providers are stretched beyond capacity, and the route to actually getting the appropriate services is too often a protracted battle. Autism awareness leads to early intervention, which increases the likelihood that children will receive the proper services.

"It is critical for autistic children and their families to receive services that enable them to get the support and training that can help them cope with the challenges of dealing with autism. The Autism Initiative provides for those services, so we must ensure that the Council restores funding to continue our support," said Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo.

"We will continue to work tirelessly to improve the lives of people living with autism spectrum disorders and their families by supporting and funding these vital programs and services," said Council Member Mark Weprin.

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Attachments:

IMG_5827: Council Member Mark Weprin holds a press conference and rally in support of the New York City Council Autism Initiative.

IMG_0658: Andre Rolon, 30, a young man living with Asperger Syndrome talks about why the continuation of the Autism initiative is crucial to him. He currently practices yoga at the Chelsea Studio in Manhattan through the non-profit organization YAI, a provider sponsored by the Autism Initiative.

IMG_0660: Nadia Desyatnikova is a parent of a third grader with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Her child attends all of the after school programs at Shorefront Y in Brooklyn, funded currently by the Council's Autism Initiative.