Kimberly Dick, Executive Director, 
Autism Speaks, Georgia & Tennessee

Ava’s Law was first passed in Georgia in 2015 after almost a decade of advocacy by the autism community. The law intended to reverse the discrimination that individuals diagnosed with autism experienced when health insurance plans explicitly excluded any treatment specific to autism from their coverage. Georgia families struggled for years to access basic, evidence-based care, unable to pay out of pocket. Without the appropriate funding stream, the number of providers remained extremely low and long waiting lists developed across the state.

Although it was a huge step in the right direction, the initial passage of Ava’s Law was not without compromise. Although evidence indicates that therapy is effective across the lifespan of individuals with autism, the legislature amended the original bill to cap coverage of behavioral therapy at $30,000 annually and only apply to children ages six and under.

SB 118, sponsored by Senator Renee Unterman, increased the previous dollar cap on behavioral therapy to $35,000 annually and also increased the age cap on behavioral therapy from six up to the age of 20.

The expansion of coverage in Georgia will have a huge impact on the many individuals who now will have meaningful coverage and access to medically-necessary treatments for autism. Our families are excited to either finally be able to access services they otherwise couldn’t afford because their child was over the original age cap of six or families are relieved to know that the services their child receives won’t stop when they turn seven.