A bill

TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ENACTING THE “MEDICAL CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM ACT” BY AMENDING SECTION 44‑20‑30, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS, SO AS TO DEFINE “AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER”; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 38‑71‑280, RELATING TO HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES AND REMOVE THE AGE REQUIREMENT.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act may be cited as the “Medical Care for Children with Autism Act”.

SECTION 2. Section 44‑20‑30 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

(20) “Autism spectrum disorder” means a pervasive developmental disorder as defined by the most recent publication of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or as defined in any previous edition of the DSM.

SECTION 3. Section 38‑71‑280 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 38‑71‑280. (A) As used in this section:

(1) “Autism spectrum disorder” means one of the three following disorders as defined in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association:

(a) Autistic Disorder;

(b) Asperger's Syndrome;

(c) Pervasive Developmental Disorder‑Not Otherwise Specifieda pervasive developmental disorder as defined by the most recent publication of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or as defined in any previous edition of the DSM.

(2) “Insurer” means an insurance company, a health maintenance organization, and any other entity providing health insurance coverage, as defined in Section 38‑71‑670(6), which is licensed to engage in the business of insurance in this State and which is subject to state insurance regulation.

(3) “Health maintenance organization” means an organization as defined in Section 38‑33‑20(8).

(4) “Health insurance plan” means a group health insurance policy or group health benefit plan offered by an insurer. It includes the State Health Plan, but does not otherwise include any health insurance plan offered in the individual market as defined in Section 38‑71‑670(11), any health insurance plan that is individually underwritten, or any health insurance plan provided to a small employer, as defined by Section 38‑71‑1330(17).

(5) “State Health Plan” means the employee and retiree insurance program provided for in Article 5, Chapter 11, Title 1.

(B) A health insurance plan as defined in this section must provide coverage for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder. Coverage provided under this section is limited to treatment that is prescribed by the insured's treating medical doctor in accordance with a treatment plan. With regards to a health insurance plan as defined in this section an insurer may not deny or refuse to issue coverage on, refuse to contract with, or refuse to renew or refuse to reissue or otherwise terminate or restrict coverage on an individual solely because the individual is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

(C) The coverage required pursuant to subsection (B) must not be subject to dollar limits, deductibles, or coinsurance provisions that are less favorable to an insured than the dollar limits, deductibles, or coinsurance provisions that apply to physical illness generally under the health insurance plan, except as otherwise provided for in subsection (E). However, the coverage required pursuant to subsection (B) may be subject to other general exclusions and limitations of the health insurance plan, including, but not limited to, coordination of benefits, participating provider requirements, restrictions on services provided by family or household members, utilization review of health care services including review of medical necessity, case management, and other managed care provisions.

(D) The treatment plan required pursuant to subsection (B) must include all elements necessary for the health insurance plan to appropriately pay claims. These elements include, but are not limited to, a diagnosis, proposed treatment by type, frequency, and duration of treatment, the anticipated outcomes stated as goals, the frequency by which the treatment plan will be updated, and the treating medical doctor's signature. The health insurance plan may only request an updated treatment plan once every six months from the treating medical doctor to review medical necessity, unless the health insurance plan and the treating medical doctor agree that a more frequent review is necessary due to emerging clinical circumstances.

(E) To be eligible for benefits and coverage under this section, an individual must be diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder at age eight or younger. The benefits and coverage provided pursuant to this section must be provided to any eligible person under sixteen years of age. Coverage for behavioral therapy is subject to a fifty thousand dollar maximum benefit per year. Beginning one year after the effective date of this act, this maximum benefit shall be adjusted annually on January first of each calendar year to reflect any change from the previous year in the current Consumer Price Index, All Urban Consumers, as published by the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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