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Capitol Capsule

MIRS Capitol Capsule, Tuesday, August 26, 2025

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"She most certainly does. She's looking forward to it."

- Danny **WIMMER**, spokesperson for Attorney General Dana **NESSEL,** when asked if the AG planned to testify in front of the House Oversight Committee in September after the House sent her a subpoena to appear.

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Smaller House Budget Passes, Finds $3.4 Billion For Roads

Almost two months past the statutory July 1 deadline, the House passed a $54 billion omnibus budget bill today that, when added up with education budgets earlier this summer, totals more than $78.5 billion, around $3 billion less than the current year, $5 billion less than the Governor's proposal and $6 billion less than the Senate's.

Moms' Testimony Drives Meerman Nearly Speechless: 'Your Stories Gripped My Heart'

One day, their child is a vibrant, smart and happy youngster. Seemly overnight, they become something completely different. They develop irritable behavior. They punch walls, develop tics, refuse to put on clothing, spread their feces all over the place, become obsessive-compulsive, throw over tables.

Around a dozen mothers told a House subcommittee today similar heart-wrenching stories about how their child contracted Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS) and how their insurance company (Blue Cross was mentioned numerous times) declined to cover the treatment.

Unbeknownst to the parents, their child contracted a bacterial infection, like strep throat, that their bodies don't know how to fight. Instead, the body mistakenly attacks the child's brain's basal ganglia, spurring erratic behavior.

In many cases, a strong dose of antibiotics does the trick. Apparently, this worked for a child of Rep. Jay DEBOYER (R-Clay), who suffered through this. However, in extreme cases, antibiotics aren't enough.

House Child Welfare System Subcommittee Chair Luke MEERMAN (R-Coopersville) took two hours of testimony from mothers before having to end it with more waiting to testify. It was the first time Meerman said the committee had needed an overflow room.

"Your stories gripped my heart," said Meerman, as he struggled to find words for the parents, one of whom attends his Ottawa County church. "Obviously, there is a need."

The suggested answer is mandating that insurers cover IVIG when prescribed for PANS and PANDAS, which apparently 15 states have already done. The mandate in Tennessee passed unanimously in both legislative chambers and with only a few no votes in Georgia.

Lori **CORTEVILLE** said she battled with Blue Care Network to cover intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) -- a treatment used when the body's immune system is weak or attacks itself – when her son, Nathan, contracted PANS and PANDAS. He was prescribed six treatments of IVIG, which runs about $10,000 a pop, but insurance would only cover three.

"Nathan not only relapsed, but got worse," Corteville said. "This included obsessive thoughts about dying and ending his life, hallucinations and psychotic breaks where he would literally attack his father."

By the time Nathan was allowed to get all six treatments, six months had passed, and the child went into full relapse, negating all of the progress that had been made with the first three.

The hardest story to listen to was that of "Kim T. " whose tale of horrors on how her son, Caleb, was consistently misdiagnosed at age 11. He was diagnosed with ADHD, Psuedo seizures, Tourette's and spontaneous late onset autism.

Dozens of medications and procedures later, Caleb had gone from a top 2% academic to not being able to use the toilet by himself. Doctors ultimately recommended brain surgery and drilled 18 electrodes into Caleb's skull – all because IVIG was not covered by insurance and pushed away as an option by doctors.

"Our son was in agony, and as recorded on video monitoring, was begging to die," Kim T. said. "Why was safe and effective IVIG denied while doctors gambled on risky immune depletion and brain surgery. We will never understand."

By the time doctors recommended removing part of his skull and implanting palliative seizure devices, Kim said no. They paid out of pocket to see a doctor who got them IVIG, but it was too late.

The numerous seizures he had suffered up to that point left Caleb with a lifelong disability.

"He now requires 24-hour care and a one-on-one aid for his partial school days," she said. "Our lives have been ruined with unconscionable suffering. $2 million in largely ineffective care . . . We now face a lifetime of infinite debt for our family."

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan spokesperson Gabby **ABEL** said the insurer doesn't cover IVIG for PANS/PANDAS as it is not an evidence-based, peer-reviewed treatment for the conditions, according to current clinical data. Blue Cross covers psychotherapies, antimicrobial interventions and steroid therapies.

"We empathize with families whose children are suffering with the conditions related to PANS/PANDAS, but the research does not support IVIG treatment for this disorder," Abel said.

"Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan approaches all decisions with care and empathy, which is why our extensive review process for coverage decisions is thoughtful, conscientious and based on scientific information at the time."

A transcript of today's hearing can be found here.

Former Ford Engineer Running In MI-11

Former Ford Engineer and business leader Don **UFFORD** of Bloomfield Village announced his campaign for the 11th Congressional District, which is being left open by U.S. Rep. Haley STEVENS (D-Birmingham), who is running for the U.S. Senate.