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AUCD Statement on Passage of the Training and Research for Autism Improvement Nationwide Act

SILVER SPRING, MD (July 22, 2010) — The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) applauds the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Chaired by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), for unanimously passing the Training and Research for Autism Improvement Nationwide Act (H.R.5756) today. The bill was introduced by Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA) on July 15. This measure was passed by the full House of Representatives last year as part of the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 but did not make it into the final bill signed into law because the House and Senate bills were not able to go to conference.

The prevalence of autism is growing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism now affects one in every 110 children with a 57% increase from 2002 to 2006. Our current service system is unprepared to meet the growing needs of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. It is clear from the information we have received from our University Centers and families that additional resources are needed. To meet the urgent needs of the autism community we need to provide continuing education and training. There is also a need to disseminate findings of new evidence-based practices to professionals currently in the field, support workers, family members and self-advocates in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The Training and Research for Autism Improvement Nationwide Act greatly helps to address these issues by creating training initiatives to expand interdisciplinary training and continuing education on autism spectrum disorders.

“The Combating Autism Act has been instrumental in expanding the Maternal Child Health Bureau’s Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) training programs that increase the number of clinicians able to diagnose, rule out,

and work with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families. However, LEND programs primarily work with children and their families. Our national policies often forget that children and adolescents grow up to be adults with their own set of needed services and supports. It is urgent that we develop systematic structures and supports to provide for the translation of research into practice, ensure the use of evidence based interventions and provide a quality standard to the services and supports provided to adults with developmental disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum,” said Tamar Heller, PhD, Director of the Illinois Institute on Disability and Human Development University Center on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and current President of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. She continued, “One avenue for quickly and cost-effectively reaching all 50 states is to charge the UCEDDs to provide a range of training and technical assistance to education, transition, employment, and respite professionals, as well as to self-advocates and families. Clearly, more resources are needed to develop evidence-based and promising interventions for adults with autism; however, we must also develop the infrastructure to make sure that these findings are translated into daily practice as effectively and efficiently as possible.”

AUCD urges the full House of Representatives and Senate act quickly to move this important bill through Congress.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), located in Silver Spring, MD, promotes and supports a national network of interdisciplinary centers on disabilities. The members of AUCD represent every U.S. state and territory and include 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), 39 Interdisciplinary Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Programs and 19 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRC). Together, these organizations advance policy and practice through research, education, leadership, and services for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities including autism, their families and communities, in support of independence, productivity, and satisfying quality of life.

For more information and a national directory of Centers, visit www.aucd.org.

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