



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

April 2, 2011

Re: Please reauthorize Combating Autism Act before it expires this September

Dear Representative/Senator,

In 2006, President Bush signed into law the Combating Autism Act (CAA, PL 109-416). On this Autism Awareness day, the Autism Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) strongly urges you to take action to introduce and pass a bill to reauthorize this important legislation quickly before it expires this September. Otherwise, the growing number of individuals with autism will go without needed services and important research will come to an end.

This law coordinates every available system in order to efficiently and effectively address the needs of individuals with this developmental disability that now affects one percent of the American population. The law focuses on expanding research and coordination at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), increasing awareness and surveillance at the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and expanding the interdisciplinary training of health professionals to identify and support children with ASD and their families. Several provisions of the current CAA will sunset on September 30, 2011.

A new congressionally-mandated report (attached) released by U.S. Representatives Mike Doyle (D-PA) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) and prepared by the Office of Autism Research Coordination at the National Institutes of Health, shows that the Combating Autism Act has expanded research and surveillance and addresses the growing need for appropriately trained professionals able to assess, diagnose and support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

While the law has made significant gains in understanding this complex and growing disability, greater commitments are also needed to expand access to services for those with ASD. Services that are desperately needed include early intervention, education, supported employment, transition services and family supports. Individuals with ASD and their families need access to accurate information about scientifically-supported

interventions. The training of a wide range of interdisciplinary professionals to provide these services must also be a top priority. A well-trained workforce will also ensure that the findings coming out of our research institutions can be translated and made available to parents and providers across the country, and will ensure that services can be implemented as quickly as possible.

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of approximately 100 national disability organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The members of the CCD Autism Task Force strongly urge you to take action on a revised law to ensure that gaps in the research and service system are filled during this reauthorization action is taken quickly before the law expires in September.

We stand ready to assist you as you undertake this important task. Please contact Kim Musheno (kmusheno@aucd.org) or Katy Neas (kneas@easterseals.com) for more information.

Sincerely,

American Music Therapy Association
American Association on Health and Disability
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autism National Committee
Autism Society
Autism Speaks
Easter Seals
National Disability Rights Network
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy