



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Statement of Donna Meltzer, Chair

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, DC— The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) strongly urges the Senate to pass the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2005) before it sunsets this Friday, September 30, 2011. This bill extends the Combating Autism Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-416) for an additional three years without an increase in funding levels, and allows research, training and state and national coordination activities to continue. Since its enactment, the Combating Autism Act has impacted millions of individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and their families.

Republican Senators Tom Coburn (OK), Jim DeMint (SC), Mike Lee (UT), and Ron Johnson (WI) are standing in the way of continuing the important work being done by this law. At the 11th hour, Sen. Coburn argued on the Senate floor that the bill is a “disease-specific” research bill and that, as such, is not appropriate for Congress to vote on, leaving it to the NIH to decide what gets funding and priority.

CCD believes these Senators are misinformed. The Combating Autism Act is much more than a disease-specific research law. The Combating Autism Act serves people with all types of developmental disabilities, including but not limited to autism. For example, every year, Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) and Developmental Behavioral Pediatric programs train thousands of health and allied health professionals to better care for individuals with a broad range of developmental disabilities, including Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Fragile X, spina bifida, intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, and autism. Given the long waiting lists families often endure to receive diagnostic and treatment services, these training programs are essential in addressing an urgent national health need. Research

conducted under auspices of the CAA has provided important information on Fragile X, Downs Syndrome and Epilepsy.

Moreover, the networks of individuals working in the public and private nonprofit sector in every state to fulfill the goals of the Combating Autism Act combine their collective strengths through teamwork, so as to achieve goals no one person could have done alone. The network's efforts are shared, built upon, and disseminated widely, something that increases its value exponentially over time to the benefit of people with disabilities and their families. These jobs and the progressive and positive contributions they make toward treating disabilities will all be at stake if the Combating Autism Act is allowed to expire.

The House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the bill on September 20. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee unanimously passed the bill on September 7. CCD urges Congress not to turn its back on families with children with autism and other developmental disabilities. **The Senate needs to act now!**

ABOUT CCD

The [Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities](#) is a coalition of over 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. Donna Meltzer, the current chair of CCD, is the Senior Director of Government Relations at Epilepsy Foundation and can be reached at 301-459-3700; dmeltzer@efa.org.

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