April 5, 2017

Chairman Tom Cole  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington DC, 20515

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of the more than one million American families affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD, hereafter referred to as autism), we thank the Subcommittee for its leadership in designating autism funding in previous appropriations bills and we urge you to fully fund the fiscal year 2018 funding levels for the Department of Health and Human Services' autism activities as authorized by the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support Act (or Autism CARES Act/PL 113-157), in your FY 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

According to the latest released data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), estimates are that 1 in 68 children have been identified with autism. Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups. In many cases, it impairs a person’s ability to communicate and to relate to others, and remains a life-long challenge, not only for those who have been diagnosed, but for parents and other family members as well. The estimated total cost per year for children with autism in the United States is between $11.5 billion and $60.9 billion.

For FY 2018, we are specifically requesting at least the Autism CARES Act’s authorized level for the National Institutes of Health and the Interagency Coordinating Committee, $190 million; the authorization for CDC to conduct developmental disabilities surveillance and research activities: $22 million; and for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to carry out autism education, early detection, and intervention programs, $48 million.

This is a particularly exciting time for autism research. A recent report in the journal Nature Neuroscience involved the analysis of over 5,200 whole genomes from families affected by autism. That study, which is the largest whole genome study of autism to date, found 18 newly identified autism genes that affect the operation of a small subset of biological pathways in the brain. All of these pathways affect how brain cells develop and communicate with each other, providing a clear set of potential targets for future medicines. Given the important progress in the field, it is vital that we sustain and improve our investment in autism research.

The House and Senate passed the Autism CARES Act unanimously. Accordingly, we ask for your strong support for funding in the FY2018 Labor-HHS-Education bill especially to enable vigorous efforts to pursue much needed advances in autism research.
Sincerely,

Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Peter King  
Member of Congress

David Scott  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Ryan Costello  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Brendan Boyle  
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress
Marc Veasey  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress

Richard M. Nolan  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Luke Messer  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress

Anthony Brown  
Member of Congress

Bill Posey  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Patrick Meehan  
Member of Congress

Louise Slaughter  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress