

## Press Statement

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### **National Disability Organization Applauds Senators Mikulski and Enzi for Introducing “Rosa’s Law” to End Discriminatory Language**

SILVER SPRING, MD (November 18, 2009)— The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) applauds Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Michael Enzi (R-WY) for introducing bipartisan legislation to finally eliminate the harmful and demeaning term “mental retardation” from our federal laws. “Rosa’s Law” (S. 2781), a bill based on a Maryland state law by the same name, replaces the term “mental retardation” with “intellectual disability” in specific federal health, education, and labor laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Developmental Disabilities Act, and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. The bill does not expand or diminish services, rights or educational opportunities. It simply makes federal language consistent with that used by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization and the President’s Committee on Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

AUCD’s President and Director of the Institute on Disability and Human Development (UCEDD) at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Tamar Heller, said, “The way we speak about people is indicative of the value we perceive them as having. When society uses demeaning labels for people, the result is an exacerbation of archaic and discriminatory stereotypes. Changing the way we use language is the first step to dismantling those stereotypes and recognizing that people with disabilities are people first; they should be defined by who they are as people, not by their disabilities.”

“It has been a long time coming,” said George Jesien, AUCD’s Executive Director. “Self advocates have been working to have this change made for years. AUCD strongly supports this move by our federal government to take the lead in changing attitudes that will hopefully lead to greater opportunities and improved lives for millions of people with intellectual disabilities.”

Rosa’s Law has garnered support from six additional cosponsors from both sides of the aisle: Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Md.), Senator Lamar Alexander (R- Tenn.), Senator John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Senator

Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), and Senator John Thune (R-S.D.), as well as more than 30 national organizations to date, including AUCD:

<http://mikulski.senate.gov/pdfs/Press/Organizations.pdf>.

AUCD strongly encourages the House of Representatives to introduce a companion bipartisan bill and to move this common sense legislation quickly through Congress before the end of this year.

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 (UCEDDs), 39 Interdisciplinary Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Programs and 19 Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (DDRCs). Together, these organizations advance policy and practice through research, education, leadership, and services for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and communities in support of independence, productivity, and satisfying quality of life. For more information, visit AUCD's website at [www.aucd.org](http://www.aucd.org).

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