December 17, 2010

The Honorable Christopher Dodd  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Dodd,

On behalf of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), this letter is to thank you for your outstanding work and leadership on behalf of children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and related developmental disabilities. AUCD is in strong support of the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2010, a bill that would not only reauthorize this important law but also strengthen it.

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. In addition to reauthorizing the Combating Autism Act which has been instrumental in expanding research, surveillance, and expanding the number of professionals able to diagnose autism, our current service system is unprepared to meet the growing needs of youth and adults on the autism spectrum and their families. There is a critical shortage of appropriately trained personnel across numerous important disciplines that can provide services and supports to adolescents and adults on the autism spectrum. 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 Combating Autism Reauthorization Act greatly helps to address these issues by creating training initiatives to expand interdisciplinary training and continuing education on autism spectrum disorders and to authorize funds to assist youth transitioning into postsecondary education and into jobs.

The membership of AUCD includes a national network of 67 University Centers for Excellence (UCEDDs); 39 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LENDs) programs; and 15 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs). Together, these programs provide a direct national impact through direct services, the development of new professionals, and the use of new knowledge generated from our research.

AUCD applauds your commitment to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities throughout your distinguished career and will do all that we can to help to move this legislation through Congress.

Sincerely,

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