

AUCD Statement on Introduction of the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act

SILVER SPRING, MD (December 17, 2010) — The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) applauds Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ) for today introducing the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act.

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, the bill will create training initiatives to expand interdisciplinary training and continuing education on autism spectrum disorders and authorize funds to assist youth transitioning into postsecondary education and into jobs.

The Combating Autism Act has been instrumental in expanding the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) programs. The LEND training program is administered by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau to train clinicians on the use of validated screening tools to diagnose Autism Spectrum Disorders. However, LEND programs primarily work with children and their families. Our national policies often forget that children and adolescents grow up to be adults with their own set of needed services and supports. It is urgent that we develop systematic structures and supports to provide for the translation of research into practice, ensure the use of evidence based interventions and provide a quality standard to the services and supports provided to adults with developmental disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum. One avenue for quickly and cost-effectively reaching all 50 states is to charge the UCEDDs to provide a range of training and technical assistance to education, transition planning, employment, respite providers, as well as self-advocates and families. Clearly more resources are needed to develop evidence-based and promising interventions; however, we must also develop the infrastructure to make

sure that these findings are translated into daily practice as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The membership of AUCD includes a national network of 67 University Centers for Excellence (UCEDD); 39 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs; and 15 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRC). As the prevalence of autism has risen, University Centers have initiated many activities to help meet the growing need for children, adults, and families. 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 stands ready to help move this legislation toward enactment, likely in the next Congress. For more information and a national directory of Centers, see AUCD's website at www.aucd.org.

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