

National Disability Association Applauds House Action on Combating Autism Act

Urges Quick Action by Senate

SILVER SPRING, MD (September 20, 2011) — Today the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan “Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011” (H.R. 2005) by voice vote. This bill extends the Combating Autism Act of 2006 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 law has impacted millions of individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and their families. Congress must reauthorize the Combating Autism Act before September 30 when many of its important provisions will expire.

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. The Combating Autism Act has shown significant progress in identifying possible causes and in increasing the capacity of professionals to screen, diagnose, and provide evidence-based interventions for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Fragile X, spina bifida, and epilepsy. However, substantial gaps remain, and congressional action to reauthorize the Combating Autism Act is critical to sustain the work begun under this law.

“One of the greatest needs identified during the development of the legislation is the lack of trained professionals to provide identification, diagnostic and clinical services for children with ASD and other developmental disabilities,” said Daniel Crimmins, PhD, AUCD President and Director of the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at Georgia State University. “The law provided for the expansion of existing members of the AUCD network, the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs, and other networks, such as the Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) interdisciplinary training programs, to focus on training health and allied professionals in the use of valid, reliable screening and diagnostic tools, and in the provision of evidence-based interventions for children with ASD and their families. These training efforts are effectively reducing barriers to screening and diagnosis by increasing health professional capacity and awareness about ASD and other developmental disabilities among parents and early childhood providers.”

George Jesien, Ph.D. Executive Director of AUCD commented that “families, faculty, researchers and trainees across the country can breathe a little easier that this critical step has been achieved and knowing that the bill may become law within the next few days. This represents an example of what can be accomplished if Congress works together in a bipartisan manner.”

AUCD appreciates the leadership of the bill's sponsors, Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Mike Doyle (D-PA). Representatives Smith and Doyle were also leaders in developing the original law in 2006. AUCD also thanks House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman, Representative Fred Upton (R-MI) and Ranking Member Henry Waxman (D-CA), along with the panel's Health Subcommittee Chairman Joe Pitts (R-PA) and Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ), for their steadfast support of the legislation.

The Senate bill (S. 1094), sponsored by Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Michael Enzi (R-WY), Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Scott Brown (R-MA) was passed unanimously on September 7 by the HELP Committee, chaired by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA). President Obama has indicated that he would sign the bill. The next step is for the full Senate to act. AUCD urges the Senate leadership to move this bill as quickly as possible, before it expires.

About AUCD

AUCD is a national network of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs); 43 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs; and 15 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs). As the prevalence of autism has risen, University Centers have initiated many activities to help meet the growing needs of children, adults, and families. Together, these programs have a national impact through direct services, the development of new professionals, and the application of new knowledge generated from research. For more information and a national directory of Centers, see AUCD's website at www.aucd.org.

For more information on the Combating Autism Act see, "[Report to Congress on Activities Related to Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities Under the Combating Autism Act of 2006 \(FY 2006-FY 2009\)](#)".

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