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Contact: Kim Musheno
Director of Legislative Affairs
301-588-8252 ext. 222
kmusheno@aucd.org

National Disability Association Applauds Bipartisan Senate Committee Action on Autism Bill

Urges Full Senate and House to Act Quickly

SILVER SPRING, MD (September 7, 2011) — AUCD applauds the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee for unanimously passing the bipartisan “Combating Autism Reauthorization Act of 2011” (S. 1094) today. This bill simply extends the current law – the Combating Autism Act of 2006 - for three years without an increase in funding levels. 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 most of its 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, treat and support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). 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 professionals in the use of valid, reliable screening and diagnostic tools, and in the provision of evidence-based interventions for children with ASD. These training efforts are effectively reducing barriers to screening and diagnosis by increasing health professional capacity and awareness about ASD among parents and early childhood providers.”

AUCD appreciates the leadership of the bill’s sponsors, Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Michael Enzi (R-WY), Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Scott Brown (R-MA) and is pleased that the bill received a strong bipartisan vote in committee. AUCD also urges the full Senate to move quickly to pass the bill.

Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Mike Doyle (D-PA) introduced a bipartisan companion bill in the House of Representatives (H.R. 2005) earlier this year. However, even though the House bill enjoys broad support with 63 bipartisan cosponsors, no further action

has been taken. AUCD urges the House of Representatives to take quick action on this bill. The House of Representatives should not let this bill expire.

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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 \(FY 2006-FY 2009\)](#)".