



ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY CENTERS ON DISABILITIES
RESEARCH. EDUCATION. SERVICE

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

April 14, 2011

Dear Senator Durbin;

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 your legislation to develop and provide effective treatments, interventions, supports and services to individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families.

The prevalence of autism appears to be growing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of autism is growing, now affecting one in every 110 children. Clearly from the information we get from our Centers and families, our current service system is unprepared to meet the growing needs of individuals with autism and their families. There are pressing needs for trained professionals and providers to better serve children and adults with autism with the latest evidence based information and effective practices. Furthermore, while early detection and treatment are essential, families of children with autism often face numerous obstacles for obtaining high quality services for their children. Similarly, adults with autism face long waiting lists and many barriers in obtaining appropriate community-based supports and services to enable them to participate fully in society. The *Autism Services and Workforce Acceleration Act* that you have developed greatly helps to address these issues by supporting the development of services and supports for youth transitioning from school to postsecondary opportunities or jobs as well as creating a national training initiative on autism and a technical assistance center to develop and expand interdisciplinary training and continuing education on autism spectrum disorders.

The membership of AUCD includes a network of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities located in every US state and territory. These University Centers provide research, education, and service to further independence, productivity, and quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities, including autism. University Centers collaborate with stakeholders in states to identify and address training needs in creative and effective ways. As the prevalence of autism has risen, University Centers have initiated many activities to help meet the growing need for children, adults, and families. This bill builds upon these efforts by expanding the capacity of University Centers to focus on interdisciplinary training of professionals and providers in the area of autism, provide technical assistance, and disseminate information on effective community-based treatment, interventions and services.

AUCD applauds your commitment to individuals with autism and their families and looks forward to working with you on speedy passage of this bill in the 112th Congress.

Sincerely,

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