May 23, 2019

Senator Bob Menendez  
528 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mike Enzi  
379A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Chris Smith  
2373 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Mike Doyle  
306 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Menendez and Enzi and Representatives Smith and Doyle:

We are writing to express our support for The Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support Act of 2019 (Autism CARES Act of 2019), which has been introduced in the Senate as S. 427 and in the House of Representatives as H.R. 1058. The Autism CARES Act of 2019 would continue the activities authorized under the Autism CARES Act of 2014, placing a new emphasis on improving lifespan services and reducing disparities.

Under the authority of the Autism CARES Act of 2014 and predecessor legislation, more than $3.1 billion has been dedicated to autism activities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Funding has supported NIH research, including center and network grants through the Autism Centers of Excellence program; developmental disabilities surveillance and research at CDC; and training, research, and state implementation and planning at HRSA. The HRSA-supported programs include 52 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Other Related Disabilities (LEND) training programs, which builds the capacity of providers across health and related disciplines to deliver high-quality services, as well as 12 Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics training programs, which support fellows in developmental-behavioral pediatrics and provide practitioners, residents, and medical students with essential clinical, research, and other leadership skills.

The Autism CARES Act of 2019 continues the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC), which coordinates federal efforts and provides advice to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on issues related to autism. The IACC’s responsibilities include monitoring research, services, and supports across the federal government. Another important responsibility of the committee is developing a strategic plan for the conduct and support of autism research. The periodic meetings of the committee are open to the public and serve as a forum on issues important to the community.

The Autism CARES Act of 2019 calls for the preparation of a report on the health and well-being of individuals with autism. This report would follow upon the report prepared under the Autism CARES Act of 2014 on young adults and transitioning youth with autism, which highlighted the challenges young people with autism face in transitioning from school-based services to adult services.

We applaud your staff for listening to the autism community in crafting the Autism CARES Act of 2019. As you are aware, prompt congressional action on the Autism CARES Act of 2019 is essential, as parts of the Autism CARES Act of 2014 will sunset after September 30, 2019. We will work with your offices to pass the Autism CARES Act of 2019 and continue the vital programs that it supports.
Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association on Health and Disability
American Psychological Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of Special Children and Families
Association of University Centers on Disability
Autism New Jersey
Autism Science Foundation
Autism Society of America
Autism Speaks
Children’s Hospital Association
Council on Exceptional Children
Easterseals
Family Voices
Family Voices New Jersey
Family Voices North Dakota
Lakeshore Foundation
Madison House Autism Foundation
Maine Parent Federation
Marcus Autism Center
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Severe Autism
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Fragile X Foundation
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
TASH
The Independence Center
The Jewish Federations of North America
Thompson Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders