

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you and your colleagues work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 appropriations bills, we respectfully request that you fund programs that focus on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) research, screening, and support at the highest level possible. These activities are authorized by the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support Act (PL 113-157), which was passed unanimously by the House and Senate last Congress.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ASD rates have continued to rise. Prevalence data released by the CDC showed that ASD in the United States has rapidly increased from 1 in 166 in 2005, to 1 in 68 in 2014—a nearly 250 percent increase in less than 10 years. ASD occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups. The total cost per year for children with ASD in the United States is estimated to be between \$11.5 billion to \$60.9 billion.

Continued federal investment is vital to support children and adults with ASD and to research the disorder to help improve intervention and treatment. Programs at the CDC, National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) are essential to the children and families impacted by ASD.

As the nation's leading public health agency, the CDC provides vital work to better understand the epidemiology of ASD including comprehensive estimates of the prevalence of ASD and research on risk factors. Specifically, the CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." health program educates families with young children on the importance of identifying developmental concerns early. The campaign also promotes universal screenings that help ensure that children diagnosed with ASD can be connected with needed services and support early on.

Research supported by the NIH has improved the ability to screen and diagnose ASD, advanced our understanding of potential causes and spurred innovative treatments for people with ASD. Strong funding for the NIH is instrumental in helping plan research initiatives to help advance the understanding of autism. The NIH also supports the Autism Centers of Excellence, which are conducting exciting new research, such as using brain imaging technology, to chart brain development of children at risk for ASD.

We must also ensure that children and adults living with ASD have access to the resources and services they need to live as self-sufficiently as possible. For example, HRSA provides grants to states to support the transition for youth with ASD to adult health care services, employment and independence. In addition, HRSA funds several programs critical to educate health care professionals in best practices of care for children with developmental disabilities.

Your support for strong funding in FY 2017 for programs that help us better screen, diagnose, treat and support people with ASD will make a real difference in the lives of millions of Americans. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



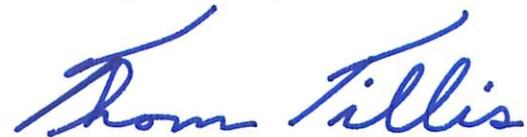
Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator