

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Thank you for your longstanding leadership in advancing funding for research, training and other federal activities that have resulted in greatly improved services and supports for children and adults with autism and their families across our country. Previous funding provided by this Subcommittee has made a tremendous difference in improving our understanding of autism, increasing awareness, and enhancing services.

In December of last year, the Autism CARES Act of 2024 was signed into law after being passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in the House and Senate. This law reauthorized and enhanced critical federally funded activities that will drive further research breakthroughs in our understanding of autism, health interventions, and services to improve the health and wellbeing of the 1 in 31 autistic children and 1 in 45 autistic adults across the country. Ensuring that the infrastructure for the vital programs this Subcommittee has supported for many years is maintained and enhanced, is critical to making advancements for autistic people and their loved ones.

Although significant progress has been made, autism research spending continues to fall far short of the levels recommended by the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC). This is despite the increased prevalence of autism and significant challenges facing autistic individuals throughout their lifespan.

We ask that the Subcommittee to ensure that the NIH is following through on new requirements from the Autism CARES Act of 2024. This includes submitting an annual budget estimate for autism research. It also includes a requirement that the Director ensure research reflects the entire population of individuals with autism spectrum disorders including those individuals with co-occurring conditions and the full range of needs, supports and services, including such supports and services to ensure the safety, and promote the well-being, of such individuals.

While we believe that the Committee should encourage additional investment and provide resources to all federal agencies involved in autism research, training and surveillance activities, we have several specific requests for FY2026.

We would specifically like to request an overall funding level of \$61.344 million for the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Autism and Developmental Disabilities program. The FY2026 request for the Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities program will support training programs, research, and systems with a focus on improving access, quality, and systems of care for children, adolescents, and young adults with autism or other developmental disabilities.

This will provide the resources needed to support the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs, the Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) programs, and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's (MCHB) Autism Research Program. Despite autism prevalence rates that have steadily increased, funding for MCHB autism research has declined over the past decade despite critical gaps that MCHB has identified that additional funding could help address. We believe that MCHB would be well positioned to help address key issues across the lifespan, services, and health care disparities.

For the LEND program, we would request a funding level of at least \$40 million in report language as has been included in previous LHHS bills. The 60 LEND programs (located in 44 U.S. states with six additional states and three territories reached through program partnerships without additional federal or state aid) are an effective workforce program that operate within a university medical system and provide graduate-level, interdisciplinary training to the next generation of clinical, research, and community leaders. The training prepares trainees to assume leadership roles in their respective fields and enhances the clinical expertise of professionals to identify, assess, and provide care to children who have or are at increased likelihood of developing autism or other developmental disabilities. In addition to professionals, the trainees and faculty include persons with disabilities and family members. Persons with disabilities and their families provide an invaluable perspective to enhance the trainee understanding of lived experiences. As trainees, persons with disabilities and family members also develop their leadership and advocacy skills as part of an interdisciplinary care team. In FY 2021, the LEND and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) programs collectively provided diagnostic services to confirm or rule out autism and other developmental disabilities to over 137,000 children; and trained over 22,000 trainees in over 40 professional disciplines.

We also request a \$5 million increase for autism-related activities at the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. We also encourage you to examine opportunities for further investment in research, education, and training so that educators and students are given the tools needed to succeed, specifically those to improve educational outcomes for students with autism and other developmental disabilities.

We appreciate the spending constraints that the Committee and our nation face and the difficult decisions involved in putting together the annual appropriations bills. Thank you very much for your consideration and for your work on behalf of the millions of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

Sincerely,



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



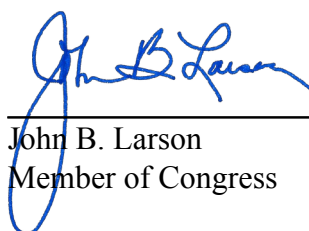
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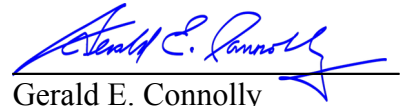
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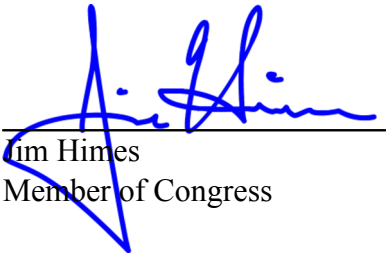
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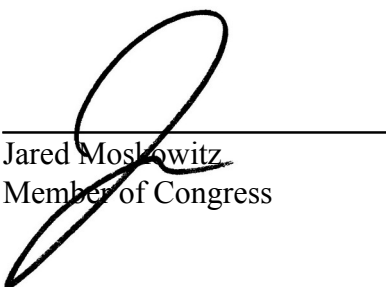
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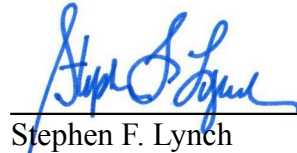
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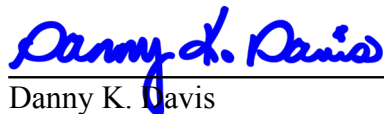
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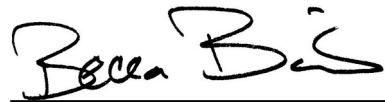
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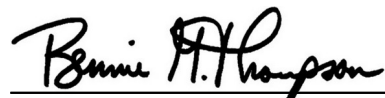
Dave Min
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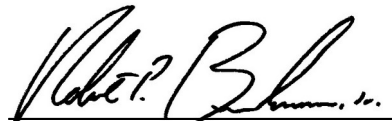
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Julia Brownley
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Bennie G. Thompson
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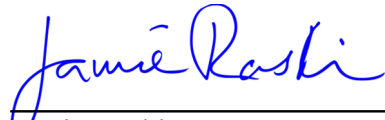
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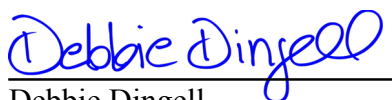
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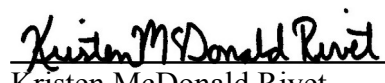
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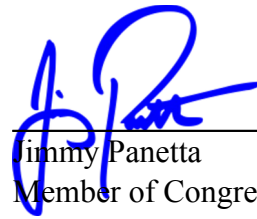
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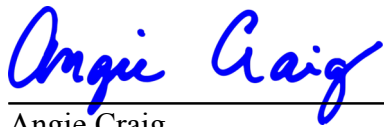
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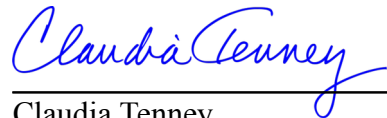
Chris Pappas
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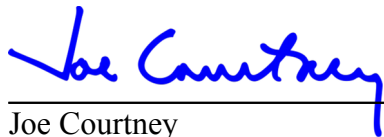
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Angie Craig
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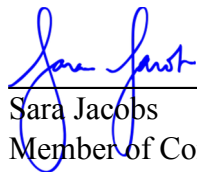
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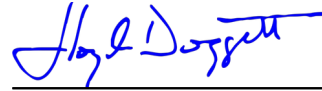
Ro Khanna
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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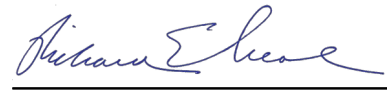
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