

July 9, 2012

Secretary Sebelius
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

We are writing to you on behalf of a coalition of autism advocacy organizations representing tens of thousands of people. We held a press conference on April 2, World Autism Day, in New York City to respond to the alarming autism prevalence rate of 1 in 88 children and 1 in 54 boys born in 2000. For your reference, here is a link to the video for the live press conference: <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/21549838>.

The focus of our letter is to request the response warranted to help the millions of Americans living with this disease: Autism is a national health emergency and HHS should treat it like one.

We wrote to you on April 4, 2012. You elected not to respond. We received a form letter answer from Dr. Collins of the National Institutes of Health on May 9, 2012 that did not respond to the concerns we communicated to you. The national autism organizations listed in this letter remain deeply dismayed by the federal government's failure to react to this crisis effectively. We continue to seek following actions:

1. That you, Secretary Sebelius, declare autism a national health emergency. The human and financial toll of autism is catastrophic. You can't solve this problem unless you first acknowledge it.
2. That you fire those who have been in charge of autism policies in this Administration, including Dr. Insel, chair of IACC. The rate of autism has risen steadily on Dr. Insel's watch. We expect accountability. Appointing a new chair of the IACC must be supported by appointment of a new diverse IACC committee to appropriately represent the population it serves and provide much needed answers.
3. That the General Accounting Office study past autism funding to see why almost all money went to genetic research. We now know, based on peer-reviewed science, that genetics are not the predominant factor in autism causation – the environment plays a much larger role. We want to understand if corporate interests or other improper interests distorted research priorities.
4. That the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rescind their recommendation for day of birth vaccination against hepatitis B. There is no medical reason for this intervention at such an early and fragile point in infant development. The CDC has never demonstrated the medical necessity for this extremely serious intervention. Vaccination against hepatitis B, unless the mother is herself infected, should occur

around puberty when children themselves might be at risk of contracting the disease. (Hepatitis B vaccination of male neonates and autism diagnosis, NHIS 1997-2002. Gallagher CM, Goodman MS. Toxicol Environ Health A. 2010;73(24):1665-77.)

5. That you recommend that the Government Reform and Oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives hold hearings in the near future on the role of federal authorities in this crisis. No Congressional committee has looked seriously at the conflicts of interest in federal activity on autism in almost ten years. As part of this process, Congress must examine the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program and how it has been quietly acknowledging autism as a vaccine injury for almost 25 years. We need real inquiry by Congress into this debacle.

The grassroots organizations in this coalition include the Age of Autism, AutismOne, Autism Action Network, Autism Media Channel, The Canary Party, Center for Personal Rights, Elizabeth Birt Center for Autism Law and Advocacy, Mason Allen Medlam Foundation for Autism Safety, Talk About Curing Autism and Unlocking Autism. We continue to await your positive response to help a generation of children.

Please know that the vast majority of members in all these organizations are parents of children with autism. The members of this coalition will not abandon this issue. We cannot. We live with autism every day. We will not stop pushing until we get accountable leadership and until we reverse this devastating epidemic. Please also recognize that autism is a Presidential campaign issue. What is more important than the cognitive health of our children? President Obama called himself "the Autism President" in 2008 on the campaign trail and said that he would help to solve the crisis. We hope he will stand on his statement. The autism community will get out and vote for candidates that support our number one concern.

This coalition continues to await your response and will share it immediately with all members of the coalition.

Sincerely yours,

Kim Stagliano, Age of Autism
Ed Arranga, AutismOne
John Gilmore, Autism Action Network
Polly Tommey, Autism Media Channel
Ginger Taylor, The Canary Party
Louise Kuo Habakus, Center for Personal Rights
Mary Holland, EBCALA
Lisa Ackerman, TACA
Sheila Medlam, Mason Allen Medlam Foundation for Autism Safety
Nancy Cale, Unlocking Autism