

Date:

Dear Congressman/Congresswoman _____

As a parent/grandparent/relative/friend of a child with autism, I was so pleased to learn about the hearing held on November 29th by the House Oversight and Government Reform Full Committee, 1 in 88 Children: A Look into the Federal Response to the Rising Rates of Autism. At the hearing, it became evident that more hearings are needed to discuss the Federal government's response to the complex autism epidemic.

Though autism was recognized in yesterday's hearing as a "public health crisis," it is much more than that. Our elected officials not only need to understand how to improve the Federal government's public health response to the epidemic, but also how to improve its response as it relates to the education, housing, employment, public safety, criminal justice, and financial issues facing persons with autism and their families. There are many more things we can and should do to help our children and their families.

Today I speak for many who cannot speak for themselves. A great number of children with autism have significant behavioral, communication, and social impairments that preclude them from participating in mainstream school and social activities. Many of these children also have comorbid medical issues that affect their ability to concentrate, focus, and perform activities of daily living.

Parents of children with autism are often overwhelmed with the financial implications of having more expenses for treatments, and less time to work. They are provided little guidance, and there is a lack of "best practices" on how to help children with autism become functioning members of society. Dreams of college, grandchildren, and retirement are pushed aside to focus on a variety of daily concerns, which may include toileting, communication, and social skills. And while there are certainly gifted, high-functioning adults with autism, there are also many adults with autism who are not as high functioning, who live with their aging parents, and who are unemployed, though they have much to give our society.

How can Congress address these issues more effectively, so that we can achieve a quantifiable difference in the lives of so many? Clearly, we need more hearings on each of the issues facing persons with autism and their families. Yesterday's hearing was an important first step in working to ensure the human rights that our children deserve. I am looking forward to seeing more attention on the implications of the autism epidemic by the Congress in the coming year.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Name

Address