

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5446

To establish a health and education grant program related to autism spectrum disorders, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 14, 2008

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey (for himself, Mr. DOYLE, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. PENCE, Mr. WOLF, and Mr. WELDON of Florida) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To establish a health and education grant program related to autism spectrum disorders, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Global Autism Assist-
5 ance Act of 2008”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The occurrence of autism spectrum dis-
9 orders (ASD) has increased during the past decade

1 from an estimated one in 500 to an estimated one
2 in 150, according to data released by the Centers for
3 Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in February
4 2007. CDC classified as suffering from ASD chil-
5 dren whose behaviors were consistent with the
6 DSM-IV-TR criteria for Autistic Disorder,
7 Asperger's Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental
8 Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS).

9 (2) Autism is a complex neurological disorder
10 that affects an individual in the areas of social inter-
11 action and communication. Because it is a spectrum
12 disorder, it affects each individual differently and to
13 varying degrees of severity. People with autism pro-
14 cess and respond to information in unique ways. In
15 some cases, coexisting medical issues and aggressive
16 or self-injurious behavior may be present.

17 (3) The increased number of children diagnosed
18 with autism is a growing and urgent concern for
19 families, healthcare professionals, and educators, as
20 the health and education systems struggle to re-
21 spond to the needs of this population in a com-
22 prehensive manner.

23 (4) The prevalence of autism in developing
24 countries is also growing rapidly, and health and
25 education systems in these countries are particularly

1 ill-equipped to deal with these issues. Experts esti-
2 mate, for example, that there are approximately
3 2,500,000 people with an autism spectrum disorder
4 in China, and approximately 2,000,000 in India
5 alone. A large number of these people are children,
6 although reliable statistics are difficult to come by.

7 (5) Children with autism who receive intensive
8 and appropriate educational services before age five
9 often make significant functional improvements. In
10 the United States, significant efforts are being pur-
11 sued to expand early diagnosis and the provision of
12 these services. In a report on the identification, eval-
13 uation and management of children with autism, the
14 American Academy of Pediatrics recommended in
15 November 2007 that all children should be screened
16 for autism twice by the age of two, even if they have
17 no symptoms. Early screening and services for au-
18 tism are sorely lacking in most of the developing
19 world. An opportunity exists to use United States
20 expertise to significantly aid children and families in
21 developing countries, for relatively small costs.

22 **SEC. 3. GLOBAL AUTISM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

23 (a) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—The Adminis-
24 trator for the United States Agency for International De-
25 velopment shall establish and administer a health and edu-

1 cation grant program to be known as the “Global Autism
2 Assistance Program” to—

3 (1) support activities under subsection (c)(2) by
4 nongovernmental organizations and other service
5 providers, including advocacy groups, focused on au-
6 tism in developing countries; and

7 (2) establish a “teach the teachers” program
8 under subsection (d) to train health and education
9 professionals working with children with autism in
10 developing countries.

11 (b) DESIGNATION OF ELIGIBLE REGIONS.—Not later
12 than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
13 the Administrator, in consultation with knowledgeable au-
14 tism organizations such as the World Autism Organiza-
15 tion, the Autism Society of America, and Autism Speaks,
16 shall designate not fewer than two regions in developing
17 countries that are determined to—

18 (1) require assistance in dealing with autism;
19 and

20 (2) have sufficient familiarity with issues re-
21 lated to autism to make effective use of the Global
22 Autism Assistance Program.

23 (c) SELECTION OF IMPLEMENTING NGO.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
25 after the designation of eligible regions pursuant to

1 subsection (b), the Administrator shall select and
2 award a grant under this section to a nongovern-
3 mental organization with experience in autism-re-
4 lated issues to implement the Global Autism Assis-
5 tance Program through selection and awarding of
6 grants to local service providers and advocacy groups
7 focused on autism.

8 (2) ACTIVITIES.—A local service provider or ad-
9 vocacy group that receives a grant under paragraph
10 (1) may use such grant to carry out any of the fol-
11 lowing activities (including, as appropriate, the
12 translation into local languages of relevant English-
13 language publications):

14 (A) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO THE
15 PUBLIC.—Use public service announcements
16 and other public media to help the public be-
17 come more aware of the signs of autism so that
18 children with autism can be diagnosed and
19 treated earlier.

20 (B) SUPPORT TO FAMILIES.—Development
21 of resources for families, such as online web re-
22 source centers in local languages, dissemination
23 of materials to parents of newly-diagnosed chil-
24 dren, such as information contained in the Cen-
25 ters for Disease Control and Prevention's publi-

1 cation entitled “Learn the Signs, Act Early”, or
2 other suitable alternatives, and dissemination of
3 educational aids and guides to help parents
4 with their children’s development.

5 (C) SUPPORT TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITU-
6 TIONS.—Funding for schools or other edu-
7 cational institutions, focusing on teachers of the
8 youngest students, and including the distribu-
9 tion of equipment or of the materials referred
10 to in subparagraph (B).

11 (D) SUPPORT TO CLINICS AND MEDICAL
12 CENTERS.—Provision of funding to clinics and
13 medical centers with proven records in address-
14 ing autism to assist with operating expenses, in-
15 cluding personnel, equipment supplies, and fa-
16 cilities, development of assessment testing for
17 autism, and acquisition of specialized equip-
18 ment, such as augmentative communication de-
19 vices.

20 (3) APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS.—

21 (A) SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS.—To
22 be eligible to receive a grant from the imple-
23 menting nongovernmental organization, a local
24 service provider or advocacy group shall submit
25 to such implementing nongovernmental organi-

1 zation an application at such time, in such
2 manner, and containing such information as
3 such implementing nongovernmental organiza-
4 tion may require.

5 (B) ESTABLISHMENT OF SCREENING
6 BOARD.—

7 (i) IN GENERAL.—The implementing
8 nongovernmental organization responsible
9 for implementing the Global Autism Assis-
10 tance Program shall establish a screening
11 board to be known as the “Project Advi-
12 sory Board” to review for content and ap-
13 propriateness applications from local serv-
14 ice providers or advocacy groups submitted
15 in accordance with subparagraph (A).

16 (ii) MEMBERSHIP.—The members of
17 the Project Advisory Board shall be ap-
18 pointed by the implementing nongovern-
19 mental organization, in consultation with
20 the Administrator, and in accordance with
21 the following provisions:

22 (I) Each member shall serve for
23 a term of one year and each member
24 may serve as many as three consecu-
25 tive terms.

(II) A member of the Project Advisory Board may continue to serve after the expiration of the term of such member until such time as a successor is appointed.

(III) Membership of the Project Advisory Board shall include at least seven voting members who are members of autism advocacy groups, professionals working with autism, or otherwise associated with the autism community. Among the voting members of the Board shall be at least two parents from different families of individuals with autism, one medical professional working with autism, one teacher of individuals with autism, and one individual who has autism. Efforts shall be made to include on the Project Advisory Board individuals with experience working in the developing world.

(IV) Membership of the Project Advisory Board

Advisory Board shall include non-vot-

3 (V) Membership of the Project
4 Advisory Board shall be chosen so as
5 to ensure objectivity and balance and
6 to reduce the potential for conflicts of
7 interest.

13 (d) TEACH THE TEACHERS.—

19 (A) identify health and education profes-
20 sionals to receive specialized training for teach-
21 ing and working with youth with autism, in-
22 cluding training conducted in two- or three-day
23 workshops at locations within one of the two re-
24 gions designated pursuant to subsection (b);
25 and

1 (B) conduct training through two- or
2 three-day biomedical conferences in the two re-
3 gions designated pursuant to subsection (b), in-
4 cluding bringing medical and psychological spe-
5 cialists from the United States to train and
6 educate parents and health professionals who
7 deal with autism, including training related to
8 biomedical interventions that can affect autism,
9 how nutrition and various metabolic issues can
10 impact behavior, the role of applied behavioral
11 analysis, and various occupational and speech
12 therapies in fighting autism.

13 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
14 are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator
15 \$3,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 and 2010 and
16 \$4,000,000 for fiscal year 2011 to carry out this section.

17 (f) AUTISM DEFINED.—For purposes of this Act, the
18 term “autism” means all conditions consistent with au-
19 tism spectrum disorders described in section 2(1).

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