

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2798

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

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 2, 2008

Mr. COLEMAN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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) In February 2007, the Centers for Disease
9 Control and Prevention released data indicating
10 that—

(A) the occurrence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) increased between 1996 and 2006 from an estimated 1 in 500 to an estimated 1 in 150; and

(B) the behaviors of children who were classified as suffering from ASD were consistent with the DSM–IV–TR criteria for Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified.

(2) Autism is a complex neurological disorder that affects individuals in the areas of social interaction and communication. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, it affects each individual differently and to varying degrees of severity.

(3) People afflicted with autism process and respond to information in unique ways. In some cases, coexisting medical issues may be present and aggressive or self-injurious behavior may occur.

(4) The increased number of children diagnosed with autism is a growing and urgent concern for families, healthcare professionals, and educators. Health and education systems struggle to respond to the needs of the autistic population in a comprehensive manner.

1 (5) The prevalence of autism in developing
2 countries is growing rapidly. Health and education
3 systems in these countries are particularly ill-
4 equipped to deal with the issues surrounding this
5 growth. According to expert estimates, there are ap-
6 proximately 2,500,000 people with an autism spec-
7 trum disorder in China and approximately 2,000,000
8 with such disorder in India. Although reliable statis-
9 tics are difficult to come by, a large number of these
10 people are believed to be children.

11 (6) Children with autism who receive intensive
12 and appropriate educational services before 5 years
13 of age often make significant functional improve-
14 ments. In the United States, significant efforts are
15 being pursued to expand early diagnosis and the
16 provision of these services.

17 (7) In a November 2007 report on the identi-
18 fication, evaluation, and management of children
19 with autism, the American Academy of Pediatrics
20 recommended that all children should be screened
21 twice for autism before 2 years of age, even if the
22 children have no recognizable symptoms.

23 (8) Early screening and services for autism are
24 sorely lacking in most of the developing world.
25 United States expertise could be used to signifi-

1 cantly aid children and families in developing coun-
2 tries for relatively small costs.

3 **SEC. 3. AUTISM DEFINED.**

4 In this Act, the term “autism” means all conditions
5 consistent with the autism spectrum disorders described
6 in section 2(1).

7 **SEC. 4. GLOBAL AUTISM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

8 (a) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE.—The Adminis-
9 trator, United States Agency for International Develop-
10 ment (referred to in this section as the “Administrator”)
11 shall establish and administer a health and education
12 grant program, to be known as the “Global Autism Assist-
13 ance Program”, to—

14 (1) support activities described in subsection
15 (c)(2) by nongovernmental organizations and other
16 service providers, including advocacy groups, focused
17 on treating autism in developing countries; and

18 (2) establish the “teach the teachers” program
19 described in subsection (d) to train health and edu-
20 cation professionals working with children with au-
21 tism in developing countries.

22 (b) DESIGNATION OF ELIGIBLE REGIONS.—Not later
23 than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
24 the Administrator, in consultation with knowledgeable au-
25 tism organizations, such as the World Autism Organiza-

1 tion, the Autism Society of America, and Autism Speaks,
2 shall designate not fewer than 2 regions in developing
3 countries that the Administrator determines—

4 (1) require assistance in dealing with autism;
5 and

6 (2) have health and education professionals who
7 are sufficiently familiar with issues related to autism
8 to make effective use of the Global Autism Assist-
9 ance Program.

10 (c) SELECTION OF IMPLEMENTING NONGOVERN-
11 MENTAL ORGANIZATION.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
13 after the designation of eligible regions under sub-
14 section (b), the Administrator shall select and pro-
15 vide funding to a nongovernmental organization with
16 experience in autism-related issues to implement the
17 Global Autism Assistance Program by awarding
18 grants to local service providers and advocacy groups
19 focused on autism.

20 (2) SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE.—The imple-
21 menting nongovernmental organization selected
22 under paragraph (1) shall provide, contract for, and
23 coordinate technical assistance in support of its mis-
24 sion in meeting the goals and purposes of this Act.

1 (3) ACTIVITIES.—A local service provider or ad-
2 vocacy group shall use grant funds received under
3 paragraph (1) to carry out any of the following ac-
4 tivities:

5 (A) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO THE
6 PUBLIC.—Use public service announcements
7 and other public media to help the public be-
8 come more aware of the signs of autism so that
9 children with autism can be diagnosed and
10 treated earlier.

11 (B) SUPPORT TO FAMILIES.—Develop re-
12 sources for families, such as online Internet re-
13 source centers in local languages. Disseminate
14 materials to parents of newly diagnosed chil-
15 dren, such as information contained in the Cen-
16 ters for Disease Control and Prevention’s publi-
17 cation entitled “Learn the Signs, Act Early”
18 and other suitable alternatives. Disseminate
19 educational aids and guides to help parents
20 with their children’s development.

21 (C) SUPPORT TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITU-
22 TIONS.—Provide funding for schools or other
23 educational institutions, focusing on teachers of
24 the youngest students. Distribute equipment or
25 materials referred to in subparagraph (B).

1 (D) SUPPORT TO CLINICS AND MEDICAL
2 CENTERS.—Provide funding to clinics and med-
3 ical centers with proven records in addressing
4 autism to assist with operating expenses, in-
5 cluding personnel, equipment supplies, and fa-
6 cilities. Develop assessment testing for autism.
7 Acquire specialized equipment, such as aug-
8 mentative communication devices.

9 (E) TRANSLATION.—Translate relevant
10 English-language publications into the local lan-
11 guages spoken in the eligible regions designated
12 pursuant to subsection (b).

13 (4) APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS.—

14 (A) SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS.—A
15 local service provider or advocacy group desir-
16 ing a grant under this subsection shall submit
17 an application to the implementing nongovern-
18 mental organization at such time, in such man-
19 ner, and containing such information as such
20 organization may require.

21 (B) ESTABLISHMENT OF SCREENING
22 BOARD.—

23 (i) IN GENERAL.—The implementing
24 nongovernmental organization selected
25 under paragraph (1) shall establish a

1 screening board, to be known as the
 2 “Project Advisory Board”, to review and
 3 evaluate applications from local service
 4 providers or advocacy groups submitted
 5 under subparagraph (A).

6 (ii) MEMBERSHIP.—

7 (I) APPOINTMENT OF VOTING
 8 MEMBERS.—The implementing non-
 9 governmental organization, in con-
 10 sultation with the Administrator, shall
 11 appoint at least 7 voting members of
 12 the Project Advisory Board who are
 13 members of autism advocacy groups,
 14 professionals working with autism, or
 15 otherwise associated with the autism
 16 community, including—

17 (aa) at least 2 parents from
 18 different families of individuals
 19 with autism;

20 (bb) at least 1 medical pro-
 21 fessional working with autism;

22 (cc) at least 1 teacher of in-
 23 dividuals with autism; and

24 (dd) at least 1 individual
 25 who has autism.

1 (II) TERMS.—Each member ap-
 2 pointed under subclause (I)—

3 (aa) shall serve for a term of
 4 1 year;

5 (bb) may serve up to 3 con-
 6 secutive terms; and

7 (cc) may continue to serve
 8 after the expiration of the term
 9 of such member until such time
 10 as a successor is appointed.

11 (III) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In
 12 appointing members to the Project
 13 Advisory Board under subclause (I),
 14 the implementing nongovernmental or-
 15 ganization shall attempt to—

16 (aa) ensure objectivity and
 17 balance;

18 (bb) reduce the potential for
 19 conflicts of interest; and

20 (cc) include individuals with
 21 experience working in the devel-
 22 oping world.

23 (IV) APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOT-
 24 ING MEMBERS.—The Administrator
 25 shall appoint as many non-voting

1 members to the Project Advisory
 2 Board as the Administrator deter-
 3 mines appropriate.

4 (d) TEACH THE TEACHERS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The implementing non-
 6 governmental organization, acting on behalf of the
 7 Administrator and in consultation with the Project
 8 Advisory Board, shall establish a program, to be
 9 known as the “Teach the Teachers Program”, to—

10 (A) identify health and education profes-
 11 sionals to receive specialized training for teach-
 12 ing and working with youth with autism, in-
 13 cluding training conducted in 2- or 3-day work-
 14 shops at locations within 1 of the 2 regions des-
 15 ignated pursuant to subsection (b); and

16 (B) conduct training through 2- or 3-day
 17 biomedical conferences in the 2 regions des-
 18 ignated pursuant to subsection (b), including—

19 (i) bringing medical and psychological
 20 specialists from the United States to train
 21 and educate parents and health profes-
 22 sionals who deal with autism;

23 (ii) training related to biomedical
 24 interventions that can affect autism;

1 (iii) training on how nutrition and
2 various metabolic issues can impact behav-
3 ior;

4 (iv) training on the role of applied be-
5 havioral analysis; and

6 (v) various occupational and speech
7 therapies in fighting autism.

8 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
9 are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator to
10 carry out this section—

11 (1) \$3,000,000 for fiscal year 2009;

12 (2) \$3,000,000 for fiscal year 2010; and

13 (3) \$4,000,000 for fiscal year 2011.

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