



From: **AUTISM SPEAKS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUTISM SPEAKS APPLAUDS THE INTRODUCTION OF FEDERAL
LEGISLATION TO CREATE TAX-EXEMPT SAVINGS ACCOUNTS
TO CARE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

NEW YORK, NY (February 27, 2009) -- Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, today applauded Senators Robert Casey (D-PA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), and Christopher Dodd (D-CT) for introducing S. 493, the ABLE Accounts Act of 2009, which would encourage individuals with autism and other disabilities and their families to save, tax-free, for disability-related expenses. Senators Richard Burr (R-NC), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and Sam Brownback (R-KS) are the bill's original co-sponsors.

The ABLE Accounts Act of 2009 – or Achieving a Better Life Experience Act – would amend the IRS code to provide for the establishment of savings accounts “for the purpose of supporting individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence, and quality of life.” Similar in many respects to existing 529 college savings plans, these accounts will be exempt from federal taxation, provided certain rules are met. The legislation’s intent is to supplement rather than to replace benefits provided by other sources, including Medicaid and private insurance.

Accounts will have a contribution limit of \$500,000 but will grow tax free and will not have any effect on the disabled individual's ability to collect from other means tested federal programs, such as Medicaid, food stamps, and federal housing assistance. Allowable expenses include: preschool education; postsecondary education; tutoring; special education services; training; employment supports; personal assistance supports; community-based supports; respite care; clothing; assistive technology; home modifications; out-of-pocket medical, vision, or dental expenses; transportation vehicle purchases or modifications; insurance premiums; habilitation and rehabilitation services; funeral and burial expenses; and other services or products allowed by regulation.

“We commend Senators Casey, Dodd, Hatch, Brownback, Burr and Kennedy for spearheading the legislative process to create these vitally important savings accounts, which will reduce an unreasonable financial burden for millions of families and end discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the federal tax code,” said Bob Wright, co-founder of Autism Speaks. “If parents are entitled to save, tax-free, to send their child to Yale, they should be able to save in the same way to help every child meet his or her full potential.”

To learn more about Autism Votes, an initiative of Autism Speaks focused on federal and state legislative advocacy, please visit www.autismvotes.org.

About Autism

Autism is a complex brain disorder that inhibits a person's ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by behavioral challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 150 children in the United States, affecting four times as many boys as girls. The prevalence of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is dedicated to increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders, to funding research into the causes, prevention and treatments for autism, and to advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. It was founded in February 2005 by Suzanne and Bob Wright, the grandparents of a child with autism. Bob Wright is Senior Advisor at Lee Equity Partners and served as vice chairman, General Electric, and chief executive officer of NBC and NBC Universal for more than twenty years. Autism Speaks merged with both the National Alliance for Autism Research (NAAR) and Cure Autism Now (CAN), bringing together the nation's three leading autism advocacy organizations. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org

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