



CAPITOL HILL PRESS CONFERENCE IN SUPPORT OF CARA

Remarks of Peter Bell

Autism Speaks Executive Vice President, Programs and Services

September 21, 2011

"Yesterday, we witnessed an historic event. After a motion to suspend the rules and with a strong voice in favor of the 'yays,' the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act, otherwise known as H.R. 2005.

"This vote to renew the landmark Combating Autism Act of 2006 was a critical step in extending the federal government's commitment to autism and related disorders. When enacted, this reauthorization will sustain federal funding at current levels, authorizing \$693 million for research and treatment for autism and other developmental disorders.

"The statistics are well known. Thanks to funding from the original CAA, we know autism now affects an estimated 1 in 110 children, 1 in 70 boys. We know the cost of autism continues to climb – some estimates as high as \$90 billion per annum. With little debate, all of us recognize autism has become a national health priority. (In the words of Congressman Smith, 'an international epidemic.')

"Reauthorization of the landmark 2006 law will enable vital federal efforts in research, surveillance, services, training, and education to continue in a way that is proven effective and accountable.

"H.R. 2005 offers hope to affected people and families across the United States.

"Autism Speaks wishes to thank all members of Congress for their steadfast support of this bill. In particular, we wish to thank the bill sponsors Congressman Chris Smith from New Jersey and Congressman Mike Doyle from Pennsylvania. In addition to being champions of H.R. 2005, they have shown incredible support and compassion for the autism community over many years as chairs of the Congressional Autism Caucus.

"Autism Speaks would also like to recognize Representatives Spencer Bachus from Alabama for his stellar leadership and support, as well as Gregg Harper from Mississippi and G.K. Butterfield from North Carolina for standing in support of the House bill yesterday. Their eloquent remarks on the floor yesterday are much appreciated.

"And finally, we also thank leaders of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, including Chairman Fred Upton from Michigan and Health Subcommittee chair Joe Pitts from Pennsylvania, for their support in allowing the bill to move to the House floor. Additionally, AS wishes to thank Majority Leader Cantor for supporting our families and allowing CARA to proceed to the House floor.

"As I close, I want to give special attention to those who will benefit the most from this bill – our children and loved ones living with autism. Tonight, when I go home to my state of New Jersey and hug my 18 year old son Tyler, who has autism, I'm going to tell him about what is happening in Washington. Large bodies of elected officials want to help him. They want to continue funding research that will help him live a more fulfilling life. A life with less pain, less suffering and more opportunities. It is my hope that members of the U.S. Senate will also realize the merits of this bill and swiftly pass it so our President will sign it into law before it expires on September 30.