



From: **AUTISM SPEAKS**
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUTISM SPEAKS LAUNCHES TV AD CAMPAIGN CALLING ON
CONGRESS TO END INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST CHILDREN WITH AUTISM**

NEW YORK, NY (July 8, 2009) -- Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, today launched a new national [television advertising campaign](#) highlighting private insurers' blatant discrimination against children with autism and calling on Congress to put an end to it as part of the broader health care reform effort. The thirty-second ad, "Neighbors," will air nationally on CNN, CNBC, and MSNBC.

"Neighbors" depicts two young boys who are next door neighbors – one, whose insurance has given him access to autism therapies is shown playing with other kids; the other, who has been deprived of access to therapies, sits alone on his lawn, socially isolated. The TV spot ends with a call to action, urging the American public to call United States Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to tell them that any national health care reform plan that does not include autism insurance reform is unacceptable.

Fourteen states have already acted to amend insurance laws and require insurers to cover medically-necessary, evidence-based autism therapies. In the other 36 states, insurers explicitly exclude coverage of these behavioral therapies from policies, which places a significant financial burden on families seeking to provide their children with necessary services. Applied behavior analysis therapy (ABA), recognized as an effective, evidence-based treatment for children with autism, costs upward of \$50,000 a year – a cost well beyond the means of most American families. A federal law would supersede state laws and require all insurers to cover ABA.

"Short of finding a cure for autism, there is nothing that can have a more significant impact on the lives of people with autism and those who love them than putting an end to insurance discrimination," said Bob Wright, co-founder of Autism Speaks. "During the presidential campaign, President Obama committed to ending autism insurance discrimination, and the pending comprehensive health reform legislation is clearly the way for that promise to be fulfilled. Now is the time to finally right this terrible wrong."

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 the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and a cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Autism Speaks funds more than \$30 million each year in new autism research, in addition to supporting the Autism Treatment Network, Autism Genetic Resource Exchange, Autism Clinical Trials Network, Autism Tissue Program and a range of other scientific and medical programs. Notable awareness initiatives include the establishment of the annual United Nations-sanctioned World Autism Awareness Day on April 2 and an award-winning, multi-year national public service advertising campaign with the Ad Council. Autism Speaks' family services efforts include the Autism Video Glossary, a 100 Day Kit for newly-diagnosed families, a School Community Tool Kit and the distribution of community grants to local service providers. Its government relations department, through its Autism Votes initiative, has played a critical role in securing federal legislation to advance the federal government's response to autism, and has successfully advocated for insurance reform to require insurers to cover medically-necessary autism therapies. Each year, Walk Now for Autism Speaks fundraising events are held in more than 70 cities across the country, as well as Canada and the United Kingdom. To learn more about Autism Speaks, please visit www.autismspeaks.org.

About the Co-Founders

Autism Speaks 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. He also serves on the board of directors of the Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation and RAND Corporation. Suzanne Wright has an extensive history of active involvement in community and philanthropic endeavors, mostly directed toward helping children. She serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations and is also Trustee Emeritus of Sarah Lawrence College, her alma mater.

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