

The AUTISM Educators Act of 2012

Congressman James P. Moran

April 2012

SUMMARY

The Autism Understanding and Training In School Methodologies for Educators Act of 2012, or AUTISM Educators Act, will establish a program to provide skills to general education classroom teachers who work with children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

INFORMATION ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the fastest growing serious developmental disability in the United States, affecting an estimated 1.5 million individuals. ASD is a group of complex developmental brain disorders that can cause a wide range of symptoms, skills and levels of impairment including social, communication and behavior changes.

1 in 88 children in the U.S. are diagnosed with ASD. Boys are five times more likely than girls to have autism; 1 in 54 boys in the U.S. diagnosed with ASD.

WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS NEEDED

While scientists work to find out exactly what is causing ASD at such alarming rates, evidenced-based educational methods have proven effective for students with high-functioning autism (HFA), Asperger syndrome, and pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) who are enrolled in a mainstream general education classroom. Knowledge of these skills should be available to all educators.

The growth rate of ASD has far out-paced education curricula, which has not given general education instructors the opportunity for training specific to students on the spectrum. The program proposed combines instructor training with parental involvement to provide the best possible education for children with ASD.

BILL: PROVIDING THE BEST EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH ASD

The AUTISM Educators Act establishes a five-year grant program to:

- Provide in-service training to general education classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff on effective ways to teach, communicate, recognize, support and interact with students with ASD;
- Focus on recruitment and retention of personnel skilled in education of children with ASD;
- Implement a program of parental support and involvement.

To qualify, 10 percent or more of a local school system's special education population must be identified with ASD. The group must partner with at least one institute of higher education or at least one nonprofit with documented expertise in assisting children with ASD.