

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 31, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Ed  
2458 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Ed  
2413 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

There is a significant gap in diagnostic services and therapeutic care for children with developmental disabilities and comorbid medical disorders in our country, many of whom rely on federal programs for health care expenses. This gap leads to ineffective treatments and excessive costs, undermining national efforts to improve medical outcomes and reduce taxpayer expenses across the health care system.

As you consider requests for the Fiscal Year 2017 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to include report language advising the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a pilot demonstration to incentivize integrated subspecialty service delivery models for pediatric patients with neurodevelopmental disabilities, including autism, that specifically incorporate treatment plans for comorbid disorders.

Poor care coordination for children with developmental and intellectual disabilities is inherent in today's fragmented system. These patients experience some of the highest rates of comorbid disorders, both physical and mental. However, these simultaneous health conditions frequently go undiagnosed, are mistakenly attributed to a primary disability or lead to a complex succession of referrals. Such complications prolong diagnosis and compromise the efficacy of treatment, placing an undue burden on patients and families who find themselves in a cul-de-sac of frustration. Failure to integrate care stymies outcomes and disproportionately impacts economically vulnerable families who are largely unable to navigate the system's complexities.

Inefficiencies along the care continuum will compound costs as prevalence increases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published data in 2011 showing that nearly 17% of children in the United States have a developmental disability. Recent reports suggest that number is on the rise, underscoring the need to make improved integration and coordination a national priority.

With your help, we can enhance care and meet the distinct needs of these special patients by taking a comprehensive approach to their treatment. Doing so will advance our shared objective to improve outcomes, lower costs and promote healthier communities through greater independence for individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,