

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 7, 2007

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
428 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

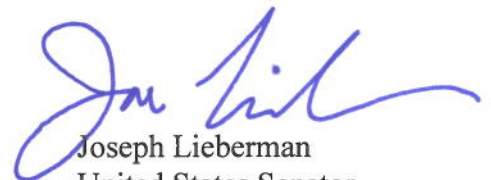
We are writing to request a hearing on federal research efforts regarding factors affecting the incidence and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. Autism in children is estimated to occur at the alarming rate of 1 in 150 American children today. We have heard countless stories about families' hardships obtaining a diagnosis for their children's autism and accessing quality medical treatment. Currently, there is no consensus on a standard of care for treating autism. Moreover, our nation's education system is struggling to best accommodate the unique needs of children with autism. It is clear that the needs of these children and families are significant and must be met.

Families of children with autism and their health care providers depend on the federal autism research agenda in hopes of preventing future cases and identifying effective treatment methods. We have heard the concerns of many Americans that a number of environmental exposures, such as thimerosal, pesticides, metals, organic pollutants and other ambient factors, may be linked to autism. Our research efforts should support broad approaches to understanding the wide range of etiological factors in our environment that may be related to autism for both prevention and treatment purposes. We believe a hearing on the current state of autism research and promising avenues of future inquiry would be integral to determining where federal research efforts can best be directed. Thank you for your time and attention to our request.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator



Joseph Lieberman
United States Senator