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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 22, 2016

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DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

The Honorable Jim Macrae, MA, MPP
Acting Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Acting Administrator Macrae:

I am writing to offer my strong support for the application submitted by Rutgers University's Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities (the Boggs Center) to be designated as a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Other Related Disabilities (LEND) Program.

As the founder and co-chairman of the Coalition for Autism Research and Education (C.A.R.E.) and the author of three major laws on autism, including most recently the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education and Support Act of 2014 (the Autism CARES Act/ Public Law 113-157), I am acutely aware of both the effectiveness of LEND and the great need to expand the program to benefit children with autism in every state.

Designating the Boggs Center in New Jersey as a LEND program is long overdue and would ensure that resources become available to address this public health need. In the most recent CDC study, New Jersey has the highest rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the nation—I in every 45 children has ASD, whereas 1 in every 68 children has ASD nationally. This designation would ensure that resources remain available to address the need for trained professionals to screen, assess and treat children with autism and related neurodevelopmental disabilities and develop innovative approaches in New Jersey.

The Boggs Center has been a valuable resource to individuals and their families throughout New Jersey who have been diagnosed with autism, as well as a source of information for me and my staff. But as you can see from the numbers, there is more that can and should be done for New Jersey's autism population.

As you know, the LEND network is currently made up of 43 programs in 37 states that are making significant strides toward improved screening and diagnosis of autism among younger children and helping to train healthcare professionals who treat a number of different developmental and intellectual disabilities. Adding a New Jersey site to the LEND network would assist with the development of the cadre of practitioners who can address this public

health challenge—particularly with regard to the young men and women with ASD who are aging out and entering adulthood.

As I stated in my letter requesting the funding increase and language that was included in the fiscal year 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 114-113): “Unfortunately, without additional funding to establish LEND programs in states that do not currently have one, children in my state will continue to be shut out from receiving these resources.”

Accordingly, I am hopeful that you will acknowledge this pressing community health need in New Jersey and offer your support to officially designate the Boggs Center as a LEND program.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and please feel free to contact me or my Legislative Director, Cate Benedetti, should you require additional information.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

CC: Robyn Schulhof, MA
Senior Public Health Analyst
HRSA, MCHB, Division of MCH Workforce Development
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