

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

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum,

On behalf of the millions American individuals and families affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD), we thank the Subcommittee for its leadership in including funding for autism research in previous Defense Appropriations bills, and respectfully request that you provide at least \$20 million for the peer reviewed autism research program in the fiscal year FY 2025 Defense Appropriations bill. This program is funded in the Defense Health Account.

The most recent data reported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) showed that 1 in 36 children and 1 in 45 adults have an ASD. Additionally, there are over 35,000 TRICARE dependent family members with an autism diagnosis.

Military life is particularly difficult for children with autism and their families. A specific and common feature of autism is extreme difficulty coping with disruption of routine or environment. Therefore, these children need a set routine, stability, and continuity of services and relationships. Military life by its nature provides few of these needs. Frequent changes of residence and schools, and the prolonged absences of a parent make life much more difficult for the child with autism and his or her caregivers. When one parent is away, the spouse or other caregiver at home must bear both the normal burdens of that situation and the additional challenge of raising a child with autism facing extraordinary stresses. This situation is likely to weaken the morale of the parent serving in the military as well as the caregiver at home.

For these reasons, we feel strongly that the high rates of autism warrant this continued investment by the Department of Defense (DOD). The Autism Research Program focuses on improving the lives of those living with ASD by funding innovative and highly impactful research to help improve diagnosis, treatment, and key lifetime transitions. Military families faced with challenges of ASD will benefit from ASD research, as will the medical, educational, healthcare and service professionals who serve the needs of the autism community within and beyond DOD.

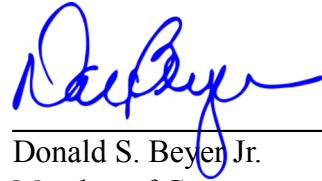
Thank you for your time and attention to this request.

Sincerely,



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Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



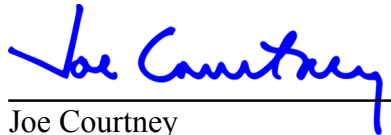
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André Carson  
Member of Congress



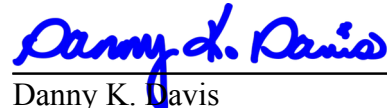
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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



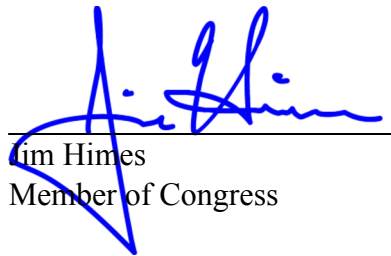
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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



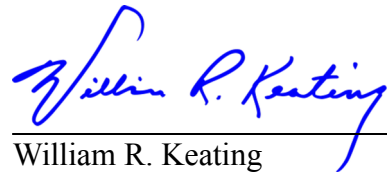
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Jim Himes  
Member of Congress



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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



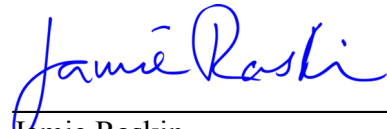
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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David Scott  
Member of Congress



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Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



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Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



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Marcus J. Molinaro  
Member of Congress



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Andrew R. Garbarino  
Member of Congress



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Bill Posey  
Member of Congress



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Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



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Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress