



WE CAN'T WAIT ON CONGRESS: THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW



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A Father Celebrates Today's Reauthorization of the Combating Autism Act

Posted by Michael Strautmanis on September 30, 2011 at 04:50 PM EDT

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Micahel Strautmanis, his wife and their three children

Every single day, I am proud and awed to be working for our President. But, some days simply take the cake. Just a few short months ago, I had a couple of those days. On April 1st, President Obama issued the first ever Presidential Proclamation to mark [World Autism Awareness Day](#). Later that month, I had another special moment when Valerie Jarrett and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced that the President and his administration fully supported [reauthorization of the Combating Autism Act](#) (CAA). As a father of a child on the autism spectrum, these were extraordinarily meaningful moments to me.

Today, President Obama [signed into law the reauthorization of the CAA](#). I was once again reminded of the honor that it is to be working for a President who gets it -- he knows that persons on the autism spectrum are at the heart of this issue.

Nearly one percent of American children are on the Autism Spectrum, and this reauthorization continues important investments in research, early detection and support and services for both children and adults. Without it, critical research would have been severely hindered and in some cases halted. Millions of persons on the Autism Spectrum would have been deprived of the potential breakthroughs resulting from valuable research, and of the chance to live independent and productive lives.

But, with the stroke of the President's pen, our work continues. Work that will advance education research that supports early diagnosis for children on the Autism Spectrum. Because we all know, the earlier we can diagnose autism, the better we can provide supports and services and work with children so they are prepared to learn when they enter school.

But we would not have gotten to today were it not for a diverse group of people working together. Members of Congress, advocates on the Autism Spectrum, parents and grandparents of children with autism, and disability advocates -- all played a key role in achieving this goal.

I read something today on a blog written by a mom with a daughter with autism that sums it up well. She spoke of our community and said, "[t]his community has meant everything to me. Without it, I would not have found my voice. Without it, I would not have written to the president, nor found myself [headed to the White House](#) to talk about our children. Without it, I would not wake up every morning knowing that I am not alone."

As we mark another success with this signing, President Obama and I know firsthand that for people on the Autism Spectrum and their loved ones, thinking about autism does not stop today. Since my son is on the Autism Spectrum, I fully understand that autism impacts people every day. President Obama knows that the best way to help my son and the thousands of American children and adults on the Autism Spectrum is to remain committed and focused so that tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after that, we'll continue to do better.

Michael Strautmanis is the Deputy Assistant to the President

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