

April 26, 2007

Hon. Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Arlen Specter  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. David Obey  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. James Walsh  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: The National Children's Study**

Dear Congressional leaders:

More American children are diagnosed with learning and developmental disabilities, autism, and behavior disorders such as ADD and ADHD every year. Studies show that one in six children now experience some form of neurodevelopmental delay. At the same time, scientific research is revealing more clearly than ever that toxic chemicals in the environment and in products can undermine the healthy development of the neurological system in the fetus, infants and children.

As directors of national organizations concerned with learning and developmental disabilities, we believe the National Children's Study (NCS) is critical to our efforts to understand and prevent the occurrence of such disabilities and disorders in future generations. Authorized by Congress in 2000 with bi-partisan support, the NCS would enroll a representative sample of 100,000 children in a comprehensive, long-term study of the environmental factors that contribute to premature births, childhood illnesses, developmental delays and learning disorders.

We urge you to appropriate the necessary funds for the National Institutes of Health to fully support the NCS, not only for fiscal year 2008, but for the duration of this enormously important undertaking. Having already invested tens of millions of dollars in planning and preparation, the NIH estimates that the next phase of this landmark study will require \$110.9 million in fiscal year 2008.

As was true with the Framingham Heart Disease Study after which the NCS is modeled, this study of children ages 0 – 20 will more than pay for itself. Participating researchers at the designated NCS Vanguard Centers anticipate that the study's findings will enable us to identify and reduce exposures that are linked to the incidence of learning and developmental disorders.

In 1999-2000, providing special education services to students with disabilities cost \$77.3 billion, which is nearly 22 percent of total spending on all elementary and secondary educational services in the U.S. in those years. Children with these health concerns are more likely to engage in substance abuse, become delinquent, commit crimes as adults and have higher rates of suicide and mental illness. Thirty-one percent of adolescents with learning disabilities will be arrested three to five years after leaving high school. Given these statistics, we need the kind of robust scientific research the NCS would provide to ensure that all children reach their fullest potential.

In short, we must gain a better understanding of how toxic chemicals in the environment are impacting neurological development and other aspects of children's health if we hope to minimize these problems and lessen the terrible burden of these disabilities and disorders on our children, families and society as a whole. The NCS will help us find the answers. Please ensure that it commences its next phase with full funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Auxter, Director  
**Research Institute for Independent Living, Adapted Physical Activity Council**  
**National Consortium for Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities**

Stephen Bennett, President and CEO  
**United Cerebral Palsy**

Sheila A. Buckley, Executive Director  
**Learning Disabilities Association of America**

Doreen Croser, Executive Director  
**American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Robert J. Fletcher, CEO  
**National Association for the Dually Diagnosed**

Lee Grossman, President and CEO  
**Autism Society of America**

George Jesien, Executive Director  
**Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)**

Elise Miller, Executive Director  
**Institute for Children's Environmental Health/CHE's Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative**

Ricki Sabia, Associate Director  
**National Down Syndrome Society**

Sue Swenson, Executive Director  
**The Arc of the United States**

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, Executive Director  
**Children's Environmental Health Network**

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