

Say Program to Help Military Kids with Autism should be Implemented Promptly

(Hartford) – This week **Congressman John B. Larson** and **Congressman Joe Courtney** joined in writing a letter to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta calling on TRICARE, the military healthcare program, to collaborate with military families and subject experts on the development of a pilot program which will help military children with autism. The one-year pilot program, included in the final 2013 defense budget authorization, is a modified version of a provision authored by Congressman John B. Larson that would require TRICARE to provide military children with autism greater access to behavioral health treatment.

"This program must be implemented promptly and given every opportunity to succeed," said Congressman Larson. "While it is crucial that we work towards a permanent solution for military families that have children with autism, we must do everything we can now to ensure that this pilot program is as effective as possible. As this program is developed, TRICARE must work with military families and subject matter experts who will help provide vital insight for ensuring that children are receiving appropriate access to care. Military families, like the Kenyons of Manchester, have sacrificed a great deal for their nation and should not have to battle to access the services and medical care their children need. I am pleased to be joined by Representatives Joe Courtney, Walter Jones, Tom Rooney and Mike Doyle in this effort and will be watching the implementation of this program closely in the coming months."

"Military families—particularly those with a parent deployed abroad or on a submarine—face unique challenges in raising children with autism," said Congressman Courtney. "This program is an important step towards ensuring that coverage for therapies and medications that are effective in treating autism will be available for military families through TRICARE. By implementing this one-year pilot program, we not only show that we take treating autism seriously, but we provide assistance to military families that already do so much to keep America safe."

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 created the one-year pilot program that allows military children with autism to receive greater access to a behavioral health treatment known as applied behavior analysis (ABA) under TRICARE. ABA is proven to significantly help children

that have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis. Access to ABA is currently limited by an annual dollar cap on coverage and is not available to children of military retirees with TRICARE coverage.

In the 112th Congress, Larson introduced the Caring for Military Kids with Autism Act (H.R. 2288) after hearing of the issues with TRICARE for military families from Rachel Kenyon, a constituent and wife of Command Sergeant Major William Kenyon of Connecticut. The one-year pilot program comes after the bipartisan passage in the House and Senate amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 that would have required permanent coverage under TRICARE Basic of ABA treatments for active military and military retiree families.

[The full letter is attached.](#)

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