

From:



Rubenstein Communications, Inc.

Adam Pockriss – 212.843.8286; apockriss@rubenstein.com

Jane Rubinstein – 212.843.8287; jrubinstein@rubenstein.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AFAA TO HOLD CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING HIGHLIGHTING
THE CRITICAL NEED FOR INCREASED SERVICES
FOR ADULTS WITH AUTISM**

**New Report from National Town Hall Outlines
Priorities for Public and Private Sector Action**

NEW YORK, N.Y. (June 10, 2010) – [Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism](#) (AFAA), a consortium of leading autism advocacy organizations and service providers, announced today that it will hold a Congressional briefing on July 15 in Washington, D.C. The briefing will bring together federal legislators, national policymakers and advocates for adults with autism – including individuals who have autism – to discuss priorities for action in the public and private sectors that address the increasing and unmet demand for effective services for adolescents and adults with the disorder.

The honorary co-chairs of the Congressional briefing are Senator Robert Menendez (NJ) and Congressman Mike Doyle (PA), and the event will include an overview of autism and the array of needs of adults on the spectrum. A stakeholder panel – featuring a diverse range of adults on the autism spectrum as well as family members – will shed light on the strengths, challenges, complexities and humanity of those most intimately affected by the condition. AFAA leadership will then present a policy agenda that has been developed during an earlier Think Tank and National Town Hall. A series of panel discussions focused on housing, employment, community life and cross-cutting themes will explore the challenges, market demands and potential solutions addressed through public/private/nonprofit collaborations.

The AFAA Congressional briefing is the latest step in an ongoing effort to identify key policy priorities to advocate for the needs of adults with autism to address critical challenges. An initial AFAA [Think Tank](#) in January 2009 was followed last November by a [National Town Hall Meeting](#), which included almost 1,200 participants in sixteen locations across the country.

Today, AFAA also released the [executive summary](#) from the National Town Hall, which will serve as a guide for the Congressional briefing. The executive summary features feedback and input from the National Town Hall participants and strategies for addressing four critical areas: housing, employment, community life and cross-cutting strategies. It also includes a five-year vision for each focus area.

Key strategies enumerated in the executive summary include: changing existing systems to ensure funding streams follow people with autism and can be used in a variety of ways to meet their unique and involving needs; increasing the availability of qualified and motivated personnel who support adults with autism; presenting a clear picture of the significant current and projected demand for housing options to leaders and institutions that direct capital and influence housing policy; expanding private and public funding for residential services for adults with autism; and engaging employers by presenting a compelling picture of the benefits of employing adults with autism.

“Working together, we have made incredible strides toward creating a focused agenda for improving access to services for adults with autism,” said Peter Bell, AFAA co-chair and executive vice president of Autism Speaks. “The Congressional briefing is an important next step as we seek to engage our elected leaders and key figures in the private sector and compel them to act in support of creating better futures for our loved ones with autism.”

“As a nation, we must acknowledge the scope of the need for services for people with autism once they enter adulthood,” said Senator Menendez, author of the Helping HANDS for Autism Act. “It requires effective public-private partnerships to tackle these profound issues facing adults with autism and their families. Individuals living with autism have tremendous contributions to make if they are given the right tools to meet their full potential.”

“Adults with autism are often overlooked by society, which tends to view autism as a childhood issue,” said Rep. Doyle, co-founder and co-chair of the Congressional Autism Caucus, also known as the Coalition for Autism Research and Education or C.A.R.E. “Autism, for most, is a life-long disorder and it presents new challenges as children with autism enter adulthood, as the availability of services available to them and their families diminishes. Adults living with autism have the right to expect that their essential needs are met so that they can lead and enjoy productive and fulfilling lives. That’s why I was happy to sign on as an honorary co-chair of this briefing, which aims to bring us closer to achieving that very important goal.”

For more information about the AFAA Congressional briefing, please visit www.afa-us.org.

About Autism

Autism is a complex brain disorder that inhibits a person’s ability to communicate and develop social relationships, and is often accompanied by behavioral challenges. Autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed in one in 110 children in the United States, affecting four times as many boys as girls. The prevalence of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called autism a national public health crisis whose cause and cure remain unknown.

About AFAA

Advancing Futures for Adults with Autism (AFAA) is a national consortium seeking to create meaningful futures for adults with autism that include homes, jobs, recreation, friends and supportive communities. This unique national consortium has united to set national priorities for adults on the autism spectrum and to transform public policy and programming for teens and adults with autism spectrum disorders. Throughout 2009,

AFAA will collect information, develop strategic solutions and advance the national agenda.

Autism Speaks, the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, and the New York Center for Autism are the AFAA organization chairs. The AFAA partners are: Global Communities of Support; Alpine Learning Group; The Autism Program of Illinois; The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation; Easter Seals; Hallmark Community Solutions; Organization for Autism Research; Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center; and the University of Miami-Nova Southeastern University Center for Autism and Related Disabilities.

For more information, please visit www.afa-us.org.

#