

April 30, 2003- Sanchez Amendment Provides Autism Training Resources

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), introduced an amendment to HR 1350, reauthorizing funds for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The amendment, H.AMDT.98, allows for the use of existing funds to develop and improve programs to train school safety personnel and first responders who work at educational facilities in the recognition of autism spectrum disorders.

The amendment trains school safety personnel and other first responders to respond appropriately to a person exhibiting characteristics of developmental disabilities or mental illness on school campuses.

Autism interferes with the normal development of the brain in the areas of reasoning, social interaction and communication skills. The disorder makes it hard for autistic children to communicate with others and relate to the outside world. They may exhibit repeated body movements (hand flapping, rocking), unusual responses to people or attachments to objects, and resistance to changes in routines. In some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behavior may be present.

"With an estimated 1.5 million people in the U.S. with some form of autism, it is now the third most common developmental disability - more common than Down's Syndrome," said Rep. Sanchez. "It is important that school safety professionals and first responders understand how autism displays in individuals so that they are dealt with appropriately."

House Amendment 98 was agreed to by voice vote as an amendment to House Resolution 1350, which was also passed today by a vote of 251-171.