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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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### Opening Statement

#### Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

### Hearing on "1 in 88 Children: A Look into the Federal Response to Rising Rates of Autism"

November 29, 2012

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today's important hearing. Thank you also for conducting it in a bipartisan manner and working with us on witnesses and written testimony for the hearing record.

We have learned much about Autism Spectrum Disorders over the past decade. Taxpayer-sponsored research has identified risk factors and evaluated therapies to assist with some symptoms. Physicians and parents now have a better understanding of the developmental signs and symptoms, allowing for earlier detection. And educators have experimented with new methods and approaches for assisting children with autism.

Congress has also acted to help individuals with autism and their families in significant ways. In 2010, we passed the Affordable Care Act, which contains significant new protections. Insurers may no longer discriminate against individuals based on preexisting conditions. Insurers may no longer impose lifetime caps on health care coverage. New plans must include screening for autism without additional costs to the parents. And young people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders may remain on their parents' health insurance plans until they are 26 years old. These are real and significant protections that will improve the lives of millions of American families.

Even with this progress, there is still more to learn and do. While autism affects all racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic groups, some studies have shown that African American, Hispanic, and Asian children are less likely to receive an early diagnosis. These delayed diagnoses cause minority children to be further behind in the development of language and motor skills. We must be vigilant in emphasizing early detection and intervention for all our children, as an early diagnosis can make a critical difference in the life-long development of a child.

We must also continue to invest federal research dollars in new and evolving therapies to improve the lives of those with Autism Spectrum Disorders. In my district, we house the Kennedy Krieger Institute, an internationally recognized institution dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with developmental disorders. These institutions improve the quality of life,

education, and continued development of those affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders, and we must continue to support them.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to examine what has been done about Autism Spectrum Disorders to date, and what more needs to be done in the future. There are many experts, individuals, and groups who can help us in this effort. One of these individuals is Ms. Simone Greggs, founder of the nonprofit autism support group, All the Love.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I ask unanimous consent that Ms. Greggs' full written statement be entered into the hearing record.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I also ask unanimous consent that the Committee allow Representative Jim Matheson to participate at today's hearing.

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by acknowledging the dedication and commitment of our colleague, Mr. Burton, who has made this one of his core issues during his tenure in Congress. Regardless of any political differences we may have, I want to commend his spirit, which has been dedicated to the best interests of children across this country.

Thank you.

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