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Cosponsors & Helps Pass Bill In House To Find Cure For Disease

Washington, DC - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) recently helped pass a bill, H. Res. 605, in the House, designed to increase awareness of autism and help find a cure for this devastating developmental disorder. The measure, which Rothman cosponsored and voted for, specifically recognizes the importance of expanding autism awareness, increasing research efforts, and improving support for people with autism and those who care for them.

"Only with additional research will we be able to better understand autism, find effective treatments and prevention methods, and hopefully, someday soon, develop a cure for this terrible disease," Rothman said. "My 13 year old nephew Jack has autism, so my family's ongoing experience has impressed upon me how critical it is for us, as a society, to give those with autism and their families the support they need to fight this devastating disease."

Autism effects approximately 1 in every 166 children in the United States, making it one of the most common childhood medical disorders. Scientists continue to disagree on the cause or causes for the dramatic increase in the number of autism cases diagnosed in the United States. With Rothman's help, funding for autism research at the National Institutes of Health has gone up from approximately \$93 million in Fiscal Year 2003 to \$96 million in Fiscal Year 2004. Rothman thinks that funding level must be higher.

"In many cases, those with autism will never marry, they will never live independently, and more than half of them will never learn to speak. Families affected by autism are forced to bear an extraordinary burden," Rothman said. "Parents, siblings and friends have to learn to communicate with and care for a child who may be incapable of either verbal or nonverbal communication or who may exhibit erratic and even violent behavior. The fact that the rate of autism diagnoses is increasing so dramatically is proof that research in this area is deserving of our nation's intensified support."

Rothman said he would continue to use his position on the House Appropriations Committee, which allocates all the discretionary funds in the federal budget, to obtain increased funding for research for autism and all other developmental diseases.

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