

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

October 4, 2016

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn Building

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
2426 Rayburn Building

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,  
Homeland Security, and Investigations  
6340 O'Neill Building

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,  
Homeland Security, and Investigations  
2252 Rayburn Building

Dear Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Conyers, Chairman Sensenbrenner, and Ranking Member Jackson Lee:

We write as leaders of the Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease and the Congressional Coalition on Autism Research and Education to urge your support for the passage of Kevin and Avonte's Law prior to the adjournment of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. Kevin and Avonte's Law is a bipartisan bill to protect children with developmental disabilities and seniors with dementia who are prone to wandering. The House version of this bill (H.R. 4919) is cosponsored by 82 Members of Congress and was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations. The Senate version (S. 2614) passed the Senate by voice vote on July 14, 2016.

Wandering, also referred to as elopement, occurs when an individual leaves a safe area or a responsible caregiver. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes wandering as an important safety issue affecting some children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Wandering is also a safety concern for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Many of these individuals have difficulty responding to law enforcement officers and other first responders and are unable to ask for help or find their way home.

Wandering is a serious challenge for families raising a child with autism. According to a recent CDC report, 1 in 68 children has an autism spectrum disorder. A study of families of autistic children published in *Pediatrics* in November 2012 found that 49% of autistic children had wandered at least once after the age of four. Of those who went missing, 24 percent were in danger of drowning and 65 percent were in danger of traffic injury.

Wandering is also a serious challenge for families affected by Alzheimer's disease. More than five million Americans currently suffer from Alzheimer's, and this number is expected to grow as the population ages. According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), more than 60 percent of individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia will wander, and if not found within 24 hours, up to half of these individuals will suffer serious injury or even death.

Kevin and Avonte's Law would reauthorize the expired Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program and expand it to include children with autism and other developmental disabilities. The program would be renamed the Missing Americans Alert Program to reflect the expanded scope. The bill would authorize \$2 million per year in fiscal years 2017-2021 to provide grants to law enforcement agencies, public safety agencies, and non-profit organizations to promote initiatives that will reduce the risk of injury and death related to wandering.

Kevin and Avonte's Law is endorsed by the Autism Safety Coalition (including The Arc, the Autism Society, Autism Speaks, SafeMinds, and the National Autism Association), the Alzheimer's Association, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, the National Down Syndrome Society, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

While we understand that the Committee on the Judiciary has a number of pressing legislative priorities to address prior to the adjournment of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, we respectfully ask that the Committee favorably report this common sense, bipartisan legislation for consideration on the Floor of the House.

Sincerely,



**Maxine Waters**  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease



**Christopher H. Smith**  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease  
Congressional Coalition on Autism Research and Education



**Mike Doyle**  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Coalition on Autism Research and Education