

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chair
Judiciary Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Nadler
Ranking Member
Judiciary Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, Chairman Goodlatte, and Ranking Member Nadler:

On behalf of the Autism Society of America, I am writing to express our strong opposition to the so-called "ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017" (H.R. 620). This misnamed bill would severely weaken the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the landmark civil rights law.

Founded in 1965, the Autism Society of America is one of the oldest and largest grassroots organizations dedicated to improving the lives of 3.5 million Americans affected by autism throughout the United States. Together with a nationwide network of 90 state and local affiliates, the Autism Society works to ensure that individuals living with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are able to maximize their quality of life, and live in a world where they are valued and appreciated for their unique skills and abilities.

H.R. 620 does not solve problems it purports to fix and, instead, removes incentives for businesses to proactively comply with a law that has been in effect for almost 30 years. Further, this ill-informed bill puts the onus on people with disabilities to jump through multiple procedural hoops before they can commence a lawsuit to protect their rights. In addition, a business could wait for years without actually removing barriers and face no penalty.

The ADA was the result of bipartisan efforts to promote the rights of people with disabilities to ensure they can participate fully in all aspects of American life. The ADA provides a balanced approach to the needs of people with disabilities and of businesses. The law requires businesses to make architectural changes to existing structures only when such changes are "readily achievable" by the business. The law defines "readily achievable" by explicit reference to the size and resources of the business to accommodate small businesses. In exchange for this graduated requirement of accessibility for public places and businesses, people with disabilities who are denied physical access can bring suit under the ADA. No monetary damages are available under the ADA, only injunctive relief and legal fees.

This notification bill is not good public policy and will only hurt people with disabilities from gaining access to places of employment, grocery stores, doctors' offices and other public establishments. Please do not support H.R. 620 and urge your fellow Members of Congress to oppose this bill. Please feel free to contact Kim Musheno, Vice President of Public Policy, at kmusheno@autism-society.org. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Scott Badesch
President and CEO