

Sample Letter to the Editor

To The Editor:

More than 45,000 school-age children in our state have an autism spectrum disorder. According to the CDC, autism rates are rising. The current rate, 1 in every 68 children, represents a vast increase of the 1 in 150 rate of only a few years ago. Yet the fiscal year 2016 budget presented to the General Assembly totally eliminates funding for The Autism Program of Illinois (TAP). The TAP network, comprised of four universities and 13 nonprofit organizations, provides services at 19 locations across our state.

Even though it has been chronically under-funded, TAP provides much-needed services for Illinois families impacted by autism. Tens of thousands of Illinois families are helped by diagnostic screenings, consultation, treatment and therapy and training. My family benefits in many ways from the services we receive from TAP. (Include personal narrative here...)

Additionally, TAP provides a solid return on investment for our state. Less than \$5 million in TAP funding has been used to leverage more than \$5.8 million in additional grants from non-state sources.

Parents of children with autism don't mind sharing the sacrifice required to achieve an honest budget for our state. It is unfair to ask them to BE the sacrifice by eliminating such an important program. I call on the legislature to restore funding for The Autism Program of Illinois.

Sincerely,