



From the CEO

Explain the Reality of AD/HD to Your Legislator

by E. Clarke Ross, D.P.A.

"Now that the election is over, let's hope the White House can focus on the issue of the overmedication of young people with psychotropic drugs... For starters, there is no scientific basis for the diagnosis of AD/HD. If a child is bored, distracted and/or boisterous in the classroom, he is often believed to be suffering from AD/HD, as opposed to, say, childhood."

—ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS, November 2004 (<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/armstrongwilliams/aw20041102.shtml>)

THE ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN by anti-psychiatry groups¹ has combined with politically "conservative" action groups² and politically "conservative" social and media commentators, such as Armstrong Williams, to more aggressively advocate public policies based on the premise that mental disorders, and AD/HD, do not exist.

This campaign—frequently based on deliberative distortions of facts and situations while simultaneously taking advantage of well-publicized situations of abuse by some governmental officials and treating professionals—is succeeding in gaining supporters and advocates in legislative bodies, including the U.S. House of Representatives. It is important that all persons who believe, based on the published science,³ that AD/HD is a brain-based disorder communicate during the coming year with their legislators—local, state and federal. This communication should not be by e-mail or letter, but as a direct telephone call to the legislator's staff with a request to meet face-to-face when your legislator is next in your community.

There is no need to be alarmist about this. As a citizen whose family is impacted by AD/HD and possibly co-occurring disorders, you just want to make the legislator aware that there is a campaign saying that AD/HD is a fraud and a lie⁴ and that you

merely want the opportunity to inform the legislator about the reality of living with AD/HD.

By way of example, on September 9, 2004, Representative Ron Paul (R-TX) introduced an amendment on the floor of the U. S. House of Representatives to the pending Department of Health and Human Services annual appropriations legislation.⁵ The amendment would prohibit any federal government funding of any mental health screening program. Rep. Paul argued that mental health screening programs—programs intended to identify the possible existence of mental health problems—lead to the forced drugging of our nation's children. The amendment was defeated—95 for and 315 against. Although overwhelmingly defeated, 94 members of the House agreed with Rep. Paul's premise. Ten years ago it would have been unheard of for the House to be considering legislation to ban mental health screening programs. The organized anti-psychiatry campaign is succeeding.

Rep. Paul has subsequently introduced legislation, H.R. 5236, the "Let Parents Raise Their Kids Act of 2004."⁶ The bill proposes "Congressional Findings" that state, "Because of the subjectivity of psychiatric diagnosis, it is all too easy for a psychiatrist to label a person's disagreement with the psychiatrist's political beliefs a mental disorder" and "Further research is necessary to firmly establish AD/HD as a brain disorder. This is not unique to AD/HD and applies to most psychiatric disorders, including disabling diseases such as schizophrenia. Although an independent diagnostic test for AD/HD does not exist...after years of clinical research and experience with AD/HD, our knowledge about the cause or causes of AD/HD remains speculative." This legislation would prohibit federal funding of "universal or

mandatory mental health screening" as contrasted with the broader prohibition of any mental health screening. There are currently no co-sponsors of the legislation.

AD/HD is a valid mental disorder. Its assessment and treatment are researched and studied, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has published evidence-based guidelines to assess and treat the disorder.^{7,8} I am not suggesting that you call legislators to support or oppose—or to debate the provisions of—the Paul legislation or any other specific legislative initiative. Rather, I am suggesting that legislators see the face of AD/HD, that they see the reality of living with AD/HD, and that they understand that there is an organized campaign to label AD/HD a fraud and a lie. You are asking legislators to merely recognize the reality and validity of AD/HD.

As the father of a 14-year-old son with the inattentive type of AD/HD and co-occurring challenges, I know the personal difficulties, frustrations, emotions and frequent tensions in dealing with the expectations of daily life. But each day is a new opportunity to inform neighbors and others about AD/HD. Legislators—school commission members, city and county council members, and state and federal legislators—who fund and regulate governmental services, supports and policies need to learn from you the living reality of AD/HD. Good luck to you as we educate America about AD/HD. ■

References

¹ Citizens Commission on Human Rights, an affiliate of the Church of Scientology, www.cchr.org; Mind Freedom, www.mindfreedom.org; and Alliance for Human Research Protection, www.ahrp.org.

² The following groups publicly supported and advocated a U.S. House of Representatives floor amendment by Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) to prohibit federal government financing of any mental health screening program: Eagle Forum, Concerned Women for America, Gun Owners of America, Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, and the International Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology.

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