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BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Today, public health officials estimate that 1 in every 88 children in America is growing up on the autism spectrum. It is a reality that affects millions of families every day, from the classroom to the job market. And while our country has made progress in supporting Americans with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), we are only beginning to understand the factors behind the challenges they face. On World Autism Awareness Day, we recommit to helping individuals on the autism spectrum reach their full potential.

To achieve that goal, we need a health care system that works for children and adults with ASDs. The Affordable Care Act prevents insurers from denying coverage to children on the autism spectrum, and it ensures new health plans must cover autism screenings at no cost to parents. Beginning in 2014, the Act will make it illegal for insurance companies to discriminate against men and women with preexisting conditions, including ASDs. And looking ahead, my Administration is investing in medical research that can help unlock tomorrow's breakthroughs in autism detection, intervention, and education.

Leveling the playing field for Americans on the autism spectrum also takes commitment in our schools. That is why we are advancing initiatives to help students with ASDs get a good education free from discrimination and undue hardship. And it is why we are making sure that education can lead to meaningful employment by supporting vocational rehabilitation programs and opening higher education to more people on the autism spectrum.

All Americans should have the chance to live full, independent lives and follow their talents wherever they lead. This month, we recognize Americans with ASDs who are walking through doors of opportunity, and we recommit to opening them wider in the years ahead.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 2, 2013, as World Autism Awareness Day. I encourage all Americans to learn more about autism and what they can do to support individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand thirteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-seventh.

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