



March 9, 2016

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

Senator Charles Schumer, Member  
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

**Re: S. 2614, Kevin and Avonte's Law**

Dear Chairman Grassley and Senator Schumer;

In 2007, a seven-year-old boy named Benjy Heil wandered away from his home in Wisconsin. After a six-day search, Benjy's body was found in a nearby creek. Like 1 in 68 American children today, Benjy was diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). His case, along with countless others, has underscored the importance of creating resources to prevent, and better respond to, ASD wandering.

Since that time almost a decade ago, the National Autism Association has dedicated the vast majority of its efforts to ASD wandering prevention and response, spearheading many of the programs and initiatives that exist today. We also requested the 2012 study published in [Pediatrics](#) showing that almost half of children with autism wander from safe settings. NAA's own data on lethal outcomes from 2011 to 2015 also shows:

- Children with ASD age 9 & younger died after wandering away from a safe setting 44% of the time; for ages 13 & under, 31% of the time
- Primary causes of death were drowning (73%) and struck by a vehicle (12%)
- In 2015, lethal outcomes nearly doubled over the previous year

This is a growing crisis in need of the strong leadership you have shown in introducing S. 2614, *Kevin and Avonte's Law*.

If enacted, *Kevin and Avonte's Law* would provide the necessary resources and training for first responders to better prevent and respond to ASD wandering cases, and facilitate the development of training and emergency protocols for school personnel and other community officials. The bill would also be used to establish or enhance notification and communications systems for the recovery of missing children with ASD. We feel strongly these efforts will serve as a critical step in preventing further deaths in our community.

On behalf of NAA and its members, we extend our sincerest gratitude for your commitment to protecting our nation's most vulnerable citizens. We stand in full support of S. 2614, *Kevin and Avonte's Law*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lori McIlwain'.

Chair  
National Autism Association