



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

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Condemning RFK's Dehumanizing Comments against People with Autism

Including the voice of a mother from the 3rd Senate District

(MADISON)—Today, Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) issued the following statement in response to the insulting commentary made last week by DHHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. about people with autism:

“On Wednesday of last week, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. made despicable comments at the expense of our neighbors with autism. I will not repeat his offensive suggestions, but he characterized people with autism as being incapable of contributing to society, he even suggested that they are incapable of finding love.

“Kennedy’s dehumanizing comments are extremely harmful to our neighbors with autism who deserve to be embraced in our communities—Who thrive in every industry, including medicine, law, art, and engineering—Who love their families, and are loved in return.

“Secretary Kennedy says that he intends to follow the science, at the same time that the Trump administration is proposing to eliminate the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and cut almost in half the National Institutes of Health, whose research has been instrumental in the development of treatments for cancer, Alzheimer’s and countless other diseases.

“Secretary Kennedy is unqualified to judge our neighbors with autism, and it is clear that he has no idea what the factors causing autism are. He should stop insulting people with autism, the parents of children with autism, as well as the experts who have dedicated their lives to autism research and therapy and start listening to them instead.

“Anne is the mother of a young man with autism, both are residents of the 3rd Senate District. Anne is a steadfast advocate for people with disabilities. After hearing Kennedy’s words, she wrote the following statement and asked that I share it:”

“When someone stands up and uses 20-year-old terminology to describe what they call a modern-day ‘epidemic,’ they’ve already revealed their bad faith. Referring to independently functioning adults as having ‘Asperger’s,’ and those with higher support needs as ‘severely autistic,’ isn’t just outdated—it’s calculated. It’s a deliberate move to fracture a unified community, to pit us against each other, and to reinforce stigma under the guise of medical objectivity.

“Let’s be clear: there is one diagnosis. Autism.

“Attempts to resurrect these false divisions are not about understanding or support. They’re about control. They’re about determining who is ‘useful’ and who is ‘excess.’ These labels are not neutral—they’re political tools used to gatekeep resources, to justify exclusion, and to create a hierarchy of whose lives are considered worth investing in.

“Yes, autism can involve impairments that impact communication, executive functioning, and access to employment. But those challenges don’t make someone less human. And the ability to work—or not work—should never determine someone’s right to exist safely in society. Yet that seems to be the only thing this administration cares about. The message is loud and clear: if you cannot be exploited for your labor, you are a burden. If you need support, you are a problem to be solved.

“Autism is not a disease. It’s not an epidemic. It’s not a tragedy. It’s a neurotype—one of many valid and diverse ways that human brains can be wired. Autistic people have always existed. It is not a modern anomaly and does not need to be ‘prevented’ or ‘fixed.’

“This is the language of eugenics. This is how people get erased.”

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