



July 30, 2008

Mark Masters
Chief Executive Officer
Talk Radio Network
P.O. Box 3755
Central Point, Oregon 97502

Dear Mr. Masters:

On behalf of the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA), representing California's independent, non-profit agencies that advocate and coordinate services on behalf of Californians with developmental disabilities, we are writing to share with you our grave concerns regarding remarks made by one of your hosts, Michael Savage.

Regional centers provide services to individuals with conditions including epilepsy, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, autism, and conditions similar to mental retardation. Over the past decade, we have seen the number of children with autism rise at an alarming rate across not only the United States, but through the entire Western world. The attention brought to this issue has been primarily to promote further education of this condition and the impacts it has not only on the children themselves, but also to their families. We join with others, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the M.I.N.D. Institute and other research entities to seek not only the cause, but solutions to addressing this public health epidemic.

The shocking comments made by Mr. Savage on his July 16th broadcast of "Savage Nation" were inflammatory, destructive, and reinforce falsehoods that our community has long attempted to dispel in the general public. Characterizing children with autism as "brats" and attributing the condition to poor parenting is not only factually inaccurate, but cruel. Parents of children with developmental disabilities, especially autism struggle on a daily basis to address the behavioral, educational, physical, social, and emotional needs of their children.

While no direct cause for autism has been found, creating false links and assigning blame is neither constructive nor useful in reaching the goal of getting these children assimilated into their communities to lead healthy, productive lives.

We consider Mr. Savage's unsavory remarks to be a setback to this goal. As an individual who garners millions of listeners and is someone his audience looks to for entertainment and information, at the very least we expect Mr. Savage to retract his factually incorrect remarks and extend to millions of others (people with autism, their families, loved ones, and advocates) an apology and offer them the respect they rightfully deserve. This negative characterization does nothing to furthering the cause of helping people with developmental disabilities, and autism in particular receive the treatment they deserve as valued members of our society.

On behalf of the 230,000 Californians with developmental disabilities and the millions of families worldwide impacted by autism, we urge you to take the necessary steps to ensure that this type of “shock jock” incident does not occur in the future. The negative attention brought to this issue through Mr. Savage’s remarks have highlighted the critical need to bring solid, researched, evidence-based information to the general public about this medical mystery. We hope that you will join with us and the many others in supporting this effort rather than condoning the poor judgment of Mr. Savage in his on-air comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Baldo", written over a horizontal line.

Robert J. Baldo
Executive Director