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The Arc of the United States Supports the U.S. Senate's Introduction of Federal Legislation to Use the Term "Intellectual Disability"

Silver Spring, Maryland – The Arc of the United States (The Arc) supports and applauds today's introduction of "Rosa's Law," a bipartisan bill introduced by U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Michael Enzi (R-WY). Modeled after a recently enacted law in the state of Maryland, this legislation would substitute the outdated, stigmatizing terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" with the terms "intellectual disability" and "individual with an intellectual disability" in federal health, education and labor policy statutes.

The term "intellectual disability" covers the same population of individuals who were previously diagnosed with the term "mental retardation," and "mentally retarded." Therefore, the change in terminology would in no way alter the eligibility requirements for services and supports.

"This bill is very important for people with intellectual disabilities who understand that language plays a crucial role in how they are perceived and treated in society and are actively advocating for terminology changes in federal and state laws. 'Retard,' 'retarded' and 'retardation,' once accepted medical terms, are now only used to demean and insult people," stated Peter V. Berns, Chief Executive Officer, The Arc of the United States (The Arc). "The Arc, believes that changing how we talk about people with disabilities is a critical step in promoting and protecting their basic civil and human rights."

Read Senator Mikulski's statement to the U.S. Senate upon introduction of the bill at:
<http://mikulski.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=319975&>.

While The Arc applauds the U.S. Senate's introduction of "Rosa's Law," it is only the first step in a lengthy process towards enactment. The Arc will continue to work to ensure the bill's introduction in the U.S. House of Representatives and its progression through the entire legislative process.

The Arc is the largest community-based nonprofit working through a network of 732 state and local chapters and their members to advocate on behalf of and serve people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc works to improve systems of supports and services, connect families, inspire communities, and influence public policy. It is the only organization that supports persons from pre-natal care through end-of-life issues and

over 100 diagnoses that may include the effects of intellectual and developmental disabilities including Autism. For more information, please visit www.thearc.org.

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