

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**THE DOUG FLUTIE, JR. FOUNDATION AND THE STATEWIDE
COALITION FOR AUTISM TO HONOR REP. BILL STRAUS FOR HIS
ADVOCACY OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Boston: The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation, in conjunction with The Statewide Coalition for Autism, announced today that it will present an award to Rep. Bill Straus to recognize his advocacy for children affected with Autism and their families. The event will take place on April 15th during the 4th annual State House Event: "April is Autism Awareness Month."

"Whenever public officials assist children and families coping with Autism, everyone benefits. The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation is pleased to join the Statewide Coalition for Autism in recognizing Rep. Straus for his leadership," noted Doug Flutie.

Rep. Straus authored legislation directing the Commissioner of Public Health to conduct a scientific study to determine the prevalence of autism in Massachusetts. The on-going study is directed at obtaining an accurate assessment of the number of affected children in Massachusetts, and to better prepare and predict their need for services.

"I am honored by the Coalition's decision to present me with this award," stated Rep. Straus. "This study shows that the State recognizes the serious concerns and implications this condition has on families and service providers," continued Straus.

Autism is a neurological disorder that impairs the development of a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. However, because the symptoms of autism can occur in any combination and with varying degrees of severity, it has been difficult to obtain an accurate number of those afflicted with the disease and is often misdiagnosed.

Recently, a number of reports suggest that the incidence of autism is increasing in the United States. If these reports are accurate, the implications for service providers, service delivery and affected families will be tremendous.

The Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc. is dedicated to assisting children with autism and their families, as well as funding educational research into the causes and consequences of childhood autism. The Statewide Coalition for Autism is comprised of Autism Advocates Groups throughout New England including the Flutie Foundation.