

**Joint Letter Of the Disability Community Responding to Hateful Comments by Michael Savage on Autism**

**Category : Changing Perceptions of Autism and Disability**

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To Sponsors of The Savage Nation Radio Show, Syndicate of Talk Radio Networks, and sponsors of Talk Radio Networks programming:

We, organizations representing people with disabilities, family members, professionals and other concerned citizens, are calling upon you to withdraw support for Talk Radio Networks in response to the outrageous comments by TRN personality Michael Alan Weiner, also known as Michael Savage.

On July 16th, Weiner announced: "Now, you want me to tell you my opinion on autism, since I'm not talking about autism? A fraud, a racket... You know what autism is? I'll tell you what autism is. In 99 percent of the cases, it's a brat who hasn't been told to cut the act out. That's what autism is... What do you mean they scream and they're silent? They don't have a father around to tell them, "Don't act like a moron. You'll get nowhere in life. Stop acting like a putz. Straighten up. Act like a man. Don't sit there crying and screaming, idiot."

These comments represent dangerous misinformation. The refusal by Talk Radio Networks to condemn the comments or undertake any steps in response to them, as well as Michael Savage's refusal to apologize, is absolutely unacceptable. The autism spectrum is a very real developmental disability affecting millions of Americans. It includes a series of impairments in social interaction and communication, executive functioning, sensory processing, and motor skills. Adults and children on the autism spectrum often require substantial supports, services and education across the lifespan. Comments like those on the Savage Nation do real damage to autistic people by increasing public ignorance and misinformation about autism, thereby putting at risk vital education, supports and services. Contrary to the remarks by Mr. Weiner, there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that autism is over diagnosed – in fact, research suggests that there is substantial under-identification of the autism spectrum, resulting in a lack of vitally needed services and education. In addition, these remarks revive outdated and damaging misconceptions about the source of autism, recalling the "refrigerator mother" myth in which parents were blamed for having autistic children.

Talk Radio Networks' sponsors must consider whether or not to associate with the hateful and offensive comments spoken by Michael Weiner. Because TRN has taken no action, we urge you to communicate the need for Mr. Weiner's immediate removal by withdrawing sponsorship for TRN's programming. There are over 50 million people with disabilities in the United States, representing approximately \$200 billion in disposable income. We represent a market that cannot be ignored. By disassociating your businesses from the ignorant and hateful remarks made this past week and taking practical steps to help educate the public about the true nature of the autism spectrum and other disabilities, we can move forward towards creating a world that will recognize the rights of all people to respect, dignity, support and inclusion.

Regards,

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