Today, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), joined by over 60 disability advocacy organizations, called on the FDA to ban the use of contingent electric shock devices to modify the behavior of children and adults with disabilities.

On April 24th, 2014, the FDA Medical Devices Advisory Committee held a panel on Neurological Devices, which found that the harms of these devices outweighed their potential benefits and created an unreasonable and substantial risk of injury. Although the FDA is authorized to ban medical devices that it determines pose an unreasonable risk of harm to consumers, it has not yet acted on the panel's recommendation.

Currently, only one institution in the United States, the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) of Canton, Massachusetts, uses contingent electric shock devices. However, one organization is too many. These shock devices often cause skin burns and long-term trauma to the victims of this "therapy." At the JRC, patients find themselves wired to these devices against their will, not knowing when they will next be shocked. Unlike any other medical device on the market today, the sole purpose of these devices is to cause pain and fear in the recipients of the shocks. As a result, the United Nations has classified them as torture devices.

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network and the co-signatories of today's letter therefore urge the FDA to ban these devices. To fail to do so would be to permit the continued abuse of disabled children and adults in the name of "therapy."