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Leading U.S. Disability Organization Denounces Sen. Bernie Sanders' Misguided Attack on People with Mental Illness

Boston, MA – The Ruderman Family Foundation, a national leader in disability inclusion, has condemned Democratic presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders for his ill-mannered attempted joke directed at the Republican party, which in fact insulted millions of people with disabilities.

During last night's Democratic debate in Flint, Michigan, Sanders stated, "You know, we are, if elected president, going to invest a lot of money into mental health," going on to say, "And when you watch these Republican debates, you know why we need to invest in that."

"When millions of Americans deal with issues of mental health it was highly inappropriate for Senator Bernie Sanders to use a real disability as a joke in last night's Democratic presidential debate," said **Jay Ruderman**, President of the Ruderman Family Foundation. "He should issue an immediate apology to Americans with mental health disabilities."

In a clear error of judgment, Sen. Sanders used people with mental illness explicitly as a means to degrade Republicans. The comment drew laughter from the audience, as well as from presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, showing once again how U.S. leaders fail to understand the impact such slurs have against people with disabilities and their families.

Unfortunately, this is the third instance in this current election cycle that a presidential candidate has used people with disabilities in a derogatory and unacceptable manner; first with Donald Trump's mocking of New York Times reporter Serge Kovaleski and Dr. Ben Carson for his metaphorical slur referring to the Republican Party as having a 'mental disorder.'

"During this year's presidential campaign several candidates have used people's real disabilities in derogatory terms," stated Ruderman. "People with disabilities make up twenty percent of the American public and as the largest minority in our country, they deserve respect from the men and women running to hold the highest office in the land."

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