

December 1, 2020

Senator Roy Blunt
Chairman, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Rosa DeLauro
Chair, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Tom Cole
Ranking Member, LHHS Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

The undersigned organizations represent a coalition of education organizations dedicated to fulfilling the funding promise for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). On behalf of over 6.8 million students with disabilities, their teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, parents, school boards and administrators, we urge you to provide the maximum increase possible in funding for IDEA as part of a fair and proportional allocation for the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 LHHS-Education appropriations bill. Specifically, we ask you provide no less than \$14 billion for IDEA Part B, \$684 million for Part B Section 619, \$975 million for IDEA Part C, \$254 million for IDEA Part D and \$70 million for the National Center for Special Education Research, putting IDEA on a glidepath to full funding.

These investments are as critical as ever, as school districts work to ensure appropriate and equitable implementation of IDEA during the COVID pandemic. Our request today is specific to the annual appropriation for the IDEA funding, an ask in addition to—not in place of—any requests our groups have made related to IDEA support in the context of the pandemic and federal emergency response.

Since its inception in 1975, IDEA has protected students with disabilities by ensuring access to a free appropriate public education. At the time the statute was enacted, Congress promised to pay 40 percent of the National Average per Pupil Expenditure. While special education funding has received significant increases over the past 17 years, federal funding has leveled off recently and has even been cut. IDEA is currently funded at \$12.76 billion. This funding level equates to approximately 13.23 percent of what is historically considered the additional cost of educating students with disabilities. The closest the federal government has come to reaching its 40 percent commitment was 18 percent in 2005.

The chronic underfunding of IDEA by the federal government places an additional burden on states, local school districts, and taxpayers to pay for special education services, a need that will only be exacerbated as state legislatures respond to the economic downturn by cutting state education funding. This compounds the existing pressure already placed on local budget dollars to cover the federal shortfall and will further shortchange other school programs that are also beneficial to students with disabilities.

We support a prioritized and meaningful investment in IDEA, without negatively impacting funding for other education programs, and urge Congress to ensure a significant increase for IDEA as you negotiate the final FY21 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

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AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Music Therapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators (NAESPA)
National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC)
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
The Arc of the United States

CC: U.S. Senate, Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives, Appropriations Subcommittee