



November 16, 2021

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chair
House Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 2051

Dear Chair Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Chair Murray, and Ranking Member Burr:

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for Federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. To support these goals and ensure that students with disabilities have every opportunity to succeed in school and beyond, Congress must deliver on its commitment to funding education costs for students with disabilities. As co-chairs of the CCD Education Task Force, we write on behalf of our Task Force in strong support of the reintroduction of the IDEA Full Funding Act. This bipartisan legislation would finally ensure Congress' commitment to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

IDEA provides Federal funds to assist states and local districts in providing special education and related services to the nation's 7.3 million students with disabilities. As you know, when IDEA was first enacted in 1975, Congress anticipated that the cost of providing special education to IDEA-eligible students would be approximately twice that of the cost to educate non-disabled students. Thus, Congress authorized a Federal funding contribution of 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure. In exchange for this Federal funding, states and districts must ensure that all eligible students are provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. While states and districts have kept their end of the bargain, the Federal government has never reached even half of its promised level of funding.

Exacerbating this severe and persistent shortfall in Federal funding is the recent increase in the number of students being served under the IDEA. In just the last 5 years for which data are available, the number of IDEA-eligible students has increased by 462,000 - an increase of more than six percent while total school enrollment has seen little to no increase in the same period of time. Students receiving special education now account for 14 percent of total school enrollment nationally.

Fiscal Year 2021 Federal funding for IDEA grants to states was \$12.94 billion, which equates to approximately 13 percent of the authorized amount. State and local budgets must cover this Federal shortfall, estimated at more than \$23 billion.

It is time for Congress to create a path to fulfilling the commitment made in 1975, when IDEA became law, that it would provide up to forty percent of the excess costs of educating students with disabilities.

While districts and schools work to address anticipated instructional loss, mental health impacts, and other adverse pandemic-related impacts of COVID-19 for students with disabilities, the need for additional IDEA funding is critical and cannot be overstated. A significant increase in Federal funding for IDEA would ensure that funding is available for school programs that can benefit all students, including students with disabilities.

We urge you to pass this important piece of legislation to provide a meaningful increase to education programs that support students with disabilities. Thank you for considering this request. Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to any of the CCD Education Task Force co-chairs listed below.

Sincerely,

CCD Education Task Force Co-Chairs:

Lindsay Kubatzky, National Center for Learning Disabilities
Kim Musheno, Autism Society of America
Laura Kaloi, Council of Parent Attorneys & Advocates and
Center for Learner Equity

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The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Education Task Force of CCD monitors federal legislation and regulations that address the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families, including regulatory efforts under federal law such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Education Task Force advocates for high expectations for children with disabilities under these and other laws.

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