



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

November 26, 2019

Chairman Richard Shelby
US Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
US Senate Appropriations Committee
Room S-128
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Roy Blunt
US Senate Subcommittee, Labor
HHS Education Appropriations
Room S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Patty Murray
US Senate Subcommittee, Labor
HHS Education Appropriations
Room S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Education Task Force urges you to **promptly work with the House of Representatives to increase investments in the federal education programs that serve students with disabilities, their families, and the educators who serve them within the Departments of Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies.**

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 uphold its responsibility to pass comprehensive appropriations bills each year and deliver on its commitment to funding education costs for students with disabilities.

Due to the expansive national reach of our coalition, we know that schools and districts need additional resources to provide essential services to students with disabilities and the federal government must come closer 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. The Senate can and must do better than the proposed FY2020 allocation for students with disabilities to be able to receive specialized instruction designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Freezing funding for IDEA does an enormous disservice to students and ignores the increased costs faced by states and local school districts in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Below is a recent story about the direct impact on students as Congress continues to under-fund IDEA:

A student with autism in the 7th grade has been in a restrictive, private special education placement. Staff at the private school and in his home district agree he is ready to return to his home school. Unfortunately, special education classrooms in his local public school are filled to capacity. Therefore, he remains in the restrictive placement at a cost of nearly \$50K annually, plus transportation. While in the more restrictive placement, the student's academic and emotional life has been negatively affected by other students and their behaviors, including having been needlessly restrained. If we could fully fund IDEA, his home-school would have space for him and he could rejoin his peers in the community.

Schools are over-capacity and have insufficient physical space to accommodate students. There are no private offices available for physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language therapies or other interventions. There is no room for sensory or other breaks. Therapy takes place in hallways. This type of environment and overcrowding severely limits the ability of education professionals to serve students as well as students' abilities to be successful.

As you negotiate final spending numbers, we strongly urge you to increase the investment in education funding.

The Senate's recently released Labor-HHS-Ed FY2020 spending bill provides only a one percent increase over the FY2019 enacted level. This bill falls woefully short of providing sufficient funding for federal education programs, ignoring the reality on the ground. Likewise, it freezes funding for the most important programs that serve students with disabilities and support educators. These programs include Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies, Title II Supporting Effective Instruction State grants, and IDEA State Grants to support special education for students with disabilities, all of which were funded at the same level as FY2019 in the Senate proposal. When adjusted for inflation, this is a cut to education spending.

Operating under a continuing resolution (CR) is equally harmful to education and simply allows appropriators to shirk their responsibility and avoid coming to an agreement to fund the federal government. The CCD Task Force is increasingly alarmed that continuing resolutions are becoming the norm. We were encouraged to see Congress work together to raise discretionary spending caps for FY2020 and FY2021. We therefore encourage you to finish the FY2020 appropriations bills as soon as possible.

We urge you to work together to provide a meaningful increase to education programs that support students with disabilities and complete the FY2020 appropriations bills before the current CR expires. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

American Dance Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Autism Society of America
Children and Adults with Attention-
Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Easterseals
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Jewish Federations of North America
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of School Psychologists
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National PTA
School Social Work Association of America
Teacher Education Division of the Council for
Exceptional Children
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc of the United States

CCD, headquartered in Washington DC, 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. Since 1973, CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families.

CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 54 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into society.

www.c-c-d.org