



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services and Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services and Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

More than seven million school-aged students, approximately 13% of the total student enrollment, are currently entitled to individualized education and related services mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the impact of the historic and continuous gross underfunding of IDEA which has further exposed the great strain that the lack of adequate IDEA funding places on state and local education systems. States and school districts are being forced to make difficult budget decisions and some districts have chosen to cease all education services to all children, including children with disabilities. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Education Task Force (CCD) believe it is imperative that Congress help states meet their obligations and provide school leaders and educators with resources to provide educational services and supports to students served under the IDEA. **We strongly recommend the following additional appropriations be included within the next COVID-19 stimulus bill:**

1. IDEA Part B: Invest \$11.3 Billion

An additional investment in Part B state grants would help states develop the technology, additional personnel, and immediate technical assistance to state and local schools systems to adjust to the new, and possibly, long-term reality of providing a free and appropriate public education to students across the nation who are sheltering at home. This would include the planning for recovery and compensatory services when students are able to safely go back to school.

2. IDEA Part C: Invest \$500 million; IDEA Part B Section 619: Invest \$400 million

IDEA's early childhood programs serve over 1 million infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities and their families through Part C and Part B Section 619, respectively. Over the last twenty years, both programs have increased the number of children served by approximately 50% and have proven that this early intervention leads to improved outcomes. These children and their families will

require extra support as they navigate important developmental milestones with their children including for 3-year old children transitioning from Part C to preschool programs.

3. **IDEA Part D Programs: Invest \$300 million**

IDEA's Part D focuses on preparing personnel, disseminating information, providing resources to families through parent training and information centers, and utilizing technology. This is the only program supporting educator preparation for special educators. Given the existing shortage of special educators and the new needs of students that the crisis demands, Congress must support states in developing emergency programs to train and certify educators.

This funding is critical to help offset the enormous costs incurred by schools and districts as they make investments in technology products, services, and personnel training in their move to provide distance education. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted on March 27 provided no dedicated funding for serving students with disabilities. Instead, state education agencies, school districts, and governors have considerable discretion in how to apportion \$13 billion among various authorized uses for elementary and secondary education, such as cleaning and sanitizing schools, purchasing educational technology, and providing emergency funding for food, housing, and other basic essentials.

In addition, the amount of funding for elementary and secondary education provided by the CARES Act pales in comparison to the amount provided by the 2009 economic stimulus law. That law, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), recognized the critical importance of education to economic recovery and provided \$100 billion for K-12 education, with \$12.2 billion (1.5%) specifically for IDEA programs out of the \$787 billion measure. By contrast, total elementary and secondary education funding under CARES is well under 1% of the \$2 trillion total.

We strongly urge you to significantly increase IDEA funding as part of the next COVID-19 stimulus bill. We must work together to ensure that schools have adequate resources to serve every child with a disability and provide equitable educational opportunities to all. For more information, please contact the co-chairs below.

Sincerely,

Education Task Force Co-Chairs:

Annie Acosta, The Arc of the United States

Amanda Lowe, National Disability Rights Network

Kim Musheno, Autism Society of America

Meghan Whittaker, National Center for Learning Disabilities

Laura Kaloi, Council of Parent Attorneys & Advocates and Natl. Center
for Special Education in Charter Schools

acosta@thearc.org

amanda.lowe@ndrn.org

kmusheno@autism-society.org

mwhittaker@ncld.org

lkaloi@stridepolicy.com

cc:

House:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chairman

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member

Senate:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member

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 monitors federal legislation and regulations that address the educational needs of children with disabilities and their families, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs.