

June 4, 2021

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

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

Senator Roy Blunt
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 Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

The undersigned organizations represent a coalition of education stakeholders and advocates dedicated to fulfilling the funding promise for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

On behalf of the more than 7.3 million students with disabilities, their teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, parents, school boards and administrators, we write to 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) 2022 LHHS-Education appropriations bill.

Specifically, we ask that you provide no less than \$15.5 billion for IDEA Part B, \$598 million for Part B Section 619, \$732 million for IDEA Part C, \$455 million for IDEA Part D, including \$300 million for Sec. 662 personnel preparation, and \$70 million for the National Center for Special Education Research, putting IDEA on a glidepath to full funding.

Our ask today is explicit to IDEA funding in the annual appropriations process, and is intended to build on the significant investment in IDEA as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP).

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 (APPE). 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. However, the closest the federal government has come to reaching its 40 percent commitment was 18 percent in 2005, and in recent years federal funding has leveled off and even been cut.

IDEA is currently funded at \$12.94 billion via annual appropriations, approximately 13 percent of APPE. We are grateful that the ARP provided approximately \$3 billion in targeted emergency funding for IDEA, including \$2.6 billion for Part B Section 611. Sustaining that funding in FY 22 through a \$15.5 billion appropriation will provide the stability of funding needed to invest in IDEA in a meaningful way and will put IDEA on the first step toward full funding, moving the federal share from just under 13 percent in annual FY21 appropriations to 15.5 percent in FY 22.

The chronic underfunding of IDEA by the federal government places an additional funding burden on states, local school districts, and taxpayers to pay for needed 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.

On the heels of one of the most difficult years our nation's schools have ever weathered, investments in special education matter more than ever. School districts are continuing their work to ensure appropriate and equitable implementation of IDEA as they navigate toward and through what will be the post-COVID norm. While there is still much to learn about the pandemic's effect on education for children with disabilities, it is already clear they have been disproportionately impacted.

We strongly support a prioritized and meaningful investment in IDEA, without negatively impacting funding for other education programs, and urge Congress to provide a significant increase for IDEA as you negotiate the FY22 appropriations package.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
American Music Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
CAST
Center for Learner Equity
Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association for Music Education
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 Pupil Transportation
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association
National PTA
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
The Advocacy Institute

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