

February 8, 2022

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

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

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

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 and disability organizations dedicated to fulfilling the funding promise for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). On behalf of over 7.2 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) 2022 LHHS-Education appropriations bill. Last June, we wrote to ask 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, \$300 million for IDEA Part D and \$70 million for the National Center for Special Education Research, putting IDEA on a glidepath to full funding.

FY22 started on October 1, and while Congress has yet to finalize the FY22 appropriations process, a federal shutdown has been avoided through a series of continuing resolutions. The current resolution is set to expire on February 18. We strongly support your work to complete the appropriations process in normal order; we are opposed to the use of a year-long continuing resolution (CR) to conclude the FY22 work.

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 funding to support students with disabilities 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 proposed FY22 increases represent the single-largest funding increase through annual appropriations process and would help reverse a more than 15-year-long trend of declining federal share. The timing of these increases couldn't be more critical: 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. 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 are at a unique point in the history of IDEA funding, with the President, Senate and House all having adopted budget proposals that include a meaningful \$2.5 billion increase in IDEA. These investments are as critical as ever, as school districts work to ensure appropriate and equitable implementation of IDEA. We support a prioritized and meaningful investment in IDEA, without negatively impacting funding for other education programs, and oppose a year-long CR. We urge Congress to ensure a significant increase for IDEA as you negotiate the final FY22 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
The Advocacy Institute
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Music Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
The Arc of the United States
Autism Society of America
Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE)
Los Angeles Unified School District
Moms Of Black And Brown Children
National Association for Pupil Transportation
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
Pennsylvania School Boards Association

San Diego Unified School District
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (TED)

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