



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES

October 31, 2016

Tom Cole, Chairman
Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
2357 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives

Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Minority Member
Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
2357 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives

Roy Blunt, Chairman
Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate

Patty Murray, Ranking Minority Member
Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee
Appropriations Committee
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members,

As you work to finalize the FY 2017 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Education Task Force writes to urge you to support the highest possible spending levels for programs that support America's 6 million children and youth with disabilities and the educators who work on their behalf.

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, CCD urges the following:

- **IDEA Part B – Grants to States: The CCD Education Task Force supports the House bill's \$500 million increase for Part B State Grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** Since 2009, the average federal share per child has remained stagnant, as has the number of students served, while the national average per pupil expenditure (APPE) has risen about 1 percent per year. The result is a declining federal contribution to the costs of educating students with special needs.
- **IDEA Part C and Section 619.** IDEA's early childhood programs serve over 1 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families through Part C (the infant, toddlers, and families program) and Part B Section 619 (the 3-5 preschool program), respectively. Over the past 20 years, both programs have increased the number of children served by approximately 50 percent. Despite this growth and positive outcomes for children and their families, federal funding has failed to keep pace with the needs of these children. While neither the House nor Senate bill provide

increases, we urge the conferees to provide additional funding to both of these programs to keep pace with the need.

- **IDEA Part D – Support Programs: The CCD Education Task Force supports the Senate bill’s proposed funding levels for Part D programs**, which provide the infrastructure to implement programs for students with disabilities under IDEA and the Every Student Succeeds Act.
 - **Specifically, CCD supports the Senate’s proposed funding level of \$30 million for IDEA Part D Technology and Media line item.** Unfortunately, the House bill slashes this funding by nearly 50%, which will effectively eliminate funding for a competitive grant program that supports free access to electronic textbooks to over 450,000 school age students with print disabilities. Under IDEA, schools are required to provide students with disabilities with accessible versions of the books they need for school. Without this funding, schools will have to resort to costly, time consuming options to meet this requirement.
 - **Additionally, CCD supports the Senate’s proposed funding level for both the State Personnel Development Grants and the Personnel Preparation Grants within IDEA Part D.** Again, the House bill makes a drastic cuts (approximately 50%) to both of these programs which are the nation’s leading source of financial assistance for future special educators, early interventionists, researchers, and specialized instructional support personnel. These programs are particularly important because special education suffers from a decades-long national shortage of special educators, particularly in rural and urban areas.
- **National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) within the Institute of Education Sciences: CCD supports restoring funding for NCSER to its 2011 funding level of \$70 million.** NCSER is one of four centers within the Institute of Education Sciences and supports a comprehensive research program to promote the highest quality and rigor in research on special education and related services, and to address the full range of issues facing children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, school personnel, and others. Its findings help inform interventions, teaching strategies, and other critical factors in educating children with disabilities.
- **Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education: CCD supports the Senate bill which provides \$110 million for FY 2017.** The House bill provides only \$100 million for the Office for Civil Rights, which is \$7 million below the fiscal year 2016 enacted level and \$37,708,000 below the President’s budget request. The Office for Civil Rights is responsible for enforcing laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in all programs and institutions that receive funds from the Department. These laws extend to 50 State educational agencies, 18,200 LEAs, and nearly 7,200 IHEs, including proprietary schools.

Providing students with disabilities inclusive educational opportunities with high expectations and access to rigorous coursework is directly linked to better employment outcomes, higher wages and lower unemployment that provide opportunities for true community integration. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2013 someone without a high school diploma earned 27% less than a person with a diploma, and 57% less than a person with a bachelor’s degree. Therefore, we urge appropriations negotiators to invest in the education of students with disabilities and other exceptional learning needs.

Thank you for considering our views as you finalize the FY 2017 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, HHS, and Education.

Please contact any of the below co-chairs for more information.

Sincerely,

The CCD Education Task Force Co-chairs:

Kim Musheno, Association of University Centers on Disabilities	301.588.8252	kmusheno@aucd.org
Lindsay E. Jones, National Center for Learning Disabilities	202.628.2662	ljones@nclld.org
Laura Kaloi, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates	202.349.2310	lkaloi@wpllc.net
Cindy Smith, Natl. Assoc. of Councils on Developmental Disabilities	202- 506-5813	csmith@nacdd.org
Amanda Lowe, National Disability Rights Network	202-408-9514	amanda.lowe@ndrn.org