



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

February 24, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

The undersigned organizations represent the Education Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD)—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.

We write to thank you for pledging to put Federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) on a 10-year glide path to full funding and to offer our support in helping achieve this goal. As a coalition that works to ensure students with disabilities have every opportunity to succeed in school and beyond, we appreciate your recognition of how essential IDEA full funding is at this moment in time.

IDEA provides Federal funds to assist states and local districts in providing special education and related services to the nation's 7.3 million students with disabilities. 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. 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. While states and districts have kept their end of the bargain, the Federal government has never reached even half of its promised level of funding.

Exacerbating this severe and persistent shortfall in Federal funding is the recent increase in the number of students being served under the IDEA. In just the last 5 years for which data are available, the number of IDEA-eligible students has increased by 462,000 - an increase of more than six percent while total school enrollment has seen little to no increase in the same period of time. Students receiving special education now account for 14 percent of total school enrollment nationally.

Fiscal Year 2021 Federal funding for IDEA grants to states was \$12.94 billion, which equates to approximately 13 percent of the authorized amount. State and local budgets must cover this Federal shortfall, estimated at more than \$23 billion.

In addition to increased funding for IDEA Part B Section 611 (grants to states), states and districts should also be provided increased funds for Part B Section 619 (preschool grants), Part C (grants to serve infants and toddlers), Part D (national activities and personnel preparation) as well as the National Center for Special Education Research. Each are integral components of equitably supporting our nation's public schools and students with disabilities.

While districts and schools work to address anticipated instructional loss for students with disabilities in the wake of COVID-19, the need for additional IDEA funding is critical and cannot be overstated. A significant increase in Federal funding for IDEA would ensure that funding is available for school programs that can benefit all students, including students with disabilities.

As you work to produce a Fiscal Year 2022 Budget, we strongly support your pledge to provide a significant increase for IDEA and urge you to prioritize a meaningful investment in IDEA, without negatively impacting funding for other education programs. We look forward to working with you on this endeavor and thank you for your support. Please let us know if we can provide additional information or support you in any way.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Council of the Blind
American Foundation for the Blind
American Music Therapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Association of Assistive Technology Act Program
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism Society of America
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
CommunicationFIRST
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
Easterseals
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools
National Down Syndrome Congress

National PTA
Spina Bifida Association
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Advocacy Institute

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

CCD Education Task Force Co-Chairs:

Meghan Whittaker, National Center for Learning Disabilities
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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. The Education Task Force advocates for enhanced opportunities for children under these laws.