



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 20, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Harkin and Moran:

The undersigned members of the Education Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) write to respectfully request that you provide additional resources above the President's request for all parts of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the Fiscal 2015 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Services bill.

When Congress originally enacted P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975, Congress authorized the federal government to pay 40 percent of each state's "excess cost" of educating children with disabilities. That amount - commonly referred to as the "IDEA full funding" amount - is calculated by taking 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure (APPE) multiplied by the number of children with disabilities served under IDEA in each state.

Over the years, while the law itself continues to work and children are being educated, the intended federal/state/local cost-sharing partnership has not been realized because Congress has never lived up to its financial obligation. In fact, in FY 2014 the federal share for IDEA is 15.8 percent, far from the IDEA full funding of 40 percent that Congress promised to children, families and educators in 1975. The President's fiscal year 2015 budget seeks to perpetuate underfunding of IDEA by level funding the program, keeping the federal share at 15.8%. As a result, local communities and states have been – and will continue to be -- forced to pay a higher proportion of the special education costs. But ultimately, children and families are the ones who are being shortchanged.

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 children served by approximately 50%.

However, federal funding has failed to keep pace. In fact, the federal cost per child has decreased by 40% in this time. As a result, states are implementing cost-savings measures such as narrowing the eligibility criteria for infants/toddlers to qualify for Part C – early intervention services and shifting costs to families. At a time when we have nationally recognized the importance of investing early to support improved developmental and academic outcomes, Congress must substantially increase its investment in IDEA’s early childhood programs.

Investments to support IDEA Part D programs that promote research, training and other important functions to improve the capacity of states and school districts to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families continues to be significantly underfunded, including still feeling the impact of sequestration. Increased investments in these initiatives are critical to the quality of services under IDEA. These programs are critical to helping states improve outcomes for students with disabilities consistent with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and IDEA.

Thank you for your consideration of the CCD’s Education Task Force’s request.

Sincerely,

ACCESS

American Dance Therapy Association

American Music Therapy Association

American Speech Language Hearing Association

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism National Committee

Brain Injury Association of America

Conference of Education Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf

Council for Exceptional Children

Division of Early Childhood of the Council of Exceptional Children

Easter Seals

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association

Institute for Educational Leadership

Learning Disabilities Association of America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Down Syndrome Society

School Social Work Association of America

Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

The Advocacy Institute

United Cerebral Palsy