



May 8, 2014

The Honorable Tim Scott  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Scott:

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Education Task Force write today regarding S. 1909, the Creating Hope and Opportunity for Individuals and Communities through Education Act (The CHOICE Act). Title II of the bill would allow states to distribute funding received by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) directly to parents of students with disabilities to pay for educational services provided at private schools. We believe this policy is not needed for several reasons.

First, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees each eligible child a free, appropriate, public education. Since IDEA was first established in 1975, tens of millions of children with disabilities received education services tailored to meet each child's unique needs. These services have been provided in a public school or with public funds at a private school when the public school could not guarantee it could meet a particular child's needs. For such children in private placement, their education services are provided at no cost to their parents.

Second, a private school has no legal requirement to meet a child's unique needs. Parents that place their children in private schools have no recourse if the school does not meet their child's educational needs. Parents forfeit important rights, legal protections, and services normally guaranteed by IDEA. A child is not guaranteed an individualized education program that is designed to meet the child's unique needs, as is provided in the public school system.

Finally, the CHOICE Act will divert tax dollars away from public schools at a time when public education needs more support from all sectors of our society.

Millions of children with disabilities have realized their dreams to be full participants in society because of the services and protections provided to them by IDEA. Thank you for considering our views.

ACCESS  
Autism National Committee  
Brain Injury Association of America  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund  
Easter Seals  
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Disability Rights Network  
National PTA  
School Social Work Association of America

cc: Senator Health, Labor, Education and Pensions Committee members  
House Education and the Workforce members