



April 21, 2025

Dear Chair Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

As you draft the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Services appropriations bill, the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) Education Task Force urges you to provide robust funding for the federal programs that support infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, their families, and the educators and other service providers who serve them while avoiding cuts to other education programs. We also wish to address the need for Congress to include the funding specifics for our programs within the statute and, to maintain the requirements of current federal statutes that require the Department of Education (Department) to oversee all federal education laws. Do not provide flexibility in the allocation of education funding for these programs and do not move these functions to other agencies.

To ensure we achieve the shared goal for students to make meaningful gains and achieve important academic, post secondary/career, and employment outcomes, Congress must uphold its responsibility to pass comprehensive appropriations bills each year and deliver on its commitment to funding early intervention and education costs for children with disabilities. It is essential that Congress address the historic underfunding of the IDEA and related programs and significantly increase and sustain key programs that support infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, their families, and the teachers and other personnel who serve them.

Recommendations

To meet these goals and to promote educational access and opportunity for all children, youth and young adults with disabilities, we respectfully request that Congress:

1. **Support and increase funding in FY 2026 for each program as outlined.**
2. **Include IDEA and related funding specifics *within* the FY 2026 statute** to ensure the allocated funding that supports students with disabilities is firmly articulated by Congress and enshrined in law.
3. **Maintain existing statutory authority for the Department to oversee all federal education laws.**

FY 2026 Funding Recommendations

IDEA Part B Section 611 (Grants to States: Ages 5-21): \$16.661 B

IDEA Part B Section 611 provides the financial support necessary to ensure that 7.5 million K-12 **students with disabilities**, approximately 15% of students, have access to **high-quality, individualized education** that promotes academic success, social inclusion, and future independence. It also provides states and local school districts the flexibility to determine how to best use the funds to meet the specific needs of their students with disabilities. This increase reflects the amount that is needed to put IDEA Part B on the bipartisan-supported glidepath to full funding (or 40 percent of the per pupil expenditure as promised to states by Congress in 1975).

IDEA Part B Section 619 (preschool) and Part C (infants and toddlers): \$491 M and \$632 M

Early intervention is key to ensuring that the nearly 1 million young children with disabilities receive the necessary support at the earliest stages of their development. These state-led programs provide children with



disabilities and their families the tools and early intervention they need to succeed in school and thrive in their communities. An increase in funding for these programs will result in better outcomes and long-term cost savings in other sectors such as healthcare, juvenile justice, and social services. It helps to close achievement gaps, prepare students for the workforce, and ensures that all children—regardless of their disabilities—are given the opportunity to succeed academically and in life.

IDEA Part D (National Activities):

State Personnel Development: \$44.4 M

State Personnel Development (SPD) is a critical program that provides states with the resources they need to improve their workforce and ensure that children with disabilities receive the high-quality, individualized education they deserve. By investing in training, recruitment, and retention of qualified personnel, SPD supports state efforts to meet the needs of students while ensuring compliance with IDEA's mandates. It's an essential part of improving the effectiveness of special education services and addressing the teacher shortages that most states are facing.

Technical Assistance and Dissemination: \$36.2 M

Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D) is a vital, cost-effective tool for states that are struggling to meet the needs of students with disabilities. By providing targeted support, TA&D enables states to maximize their resources, improve student outcomes, and stay accountable for how they use federal funds. It ensures that states retain the flexibility to meet local needs while also complying with and delivering on the promises of IDEA.

Personnel Preparation: \$135 M

Personnel preparation is crucial for addressing the current shortage of special educators and ensuring that all children with disabilities receive the high-quality education they deserve. By ensuring that teachers are well-prepared, supported, and equipped with the necessary skills, we can reduce turnover, improve outcomes, and create effective and sustainable education systems that meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Parent Information Centers: \$38.15 M

The Parent Information Centers program funds Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs), Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs), and technical assistance for parent centers. Under this program, each state has at least one PTI, with a combined total of nearly 100 centers, technical assistance centers, and CPRCS targeting children and families. Centers make valuable contributions at the state and local level by helping schools improve services and outcomes for students with disabilities. They also provide critical information on resolving disputes that may arise between schools and families.

Media and Technology: \$36.7 M

Media and technology is essential to ensure all students can access curriculum, communicate, and that staff know how to teach with these tools. Students with disabilities often require assistive technology and/or other specialized devices or software to help them access learning materials and engage in their learning. These can range from speech-to-text tools, hearing aids, adaptive keyboards, and eye-tracking systems, to more sophisticated learning software tailored to specific needs. This funding ensures that schools can provide the necessary technology and training to support student learning.



We also request funding for these related programs that impact the education and outcomes for students with disabilities:

Institute for Education Sciences (IES): \$900 M - to support Congressionally-mandated activities include providing information on the condition and progress of education, developing evidence-based educational practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students, and evaluating the effectiveness of federal and other education programs.

National Center for Special Education Research (within IES): \$70 M -to support the only federal agency specifically designated by Congress to develop and provide comprehensive research and evaluations for programs focused on students with disabilities from infancy through postsecondary education.

ESSA Title I: \$21.58 B -to promote and support equitable access to education in low-income schools and districts. Notably, children with disabilities represent a disproportionate share of poor children in these schools across the nation.

ESSA Title II: \$2.56 B -to support state efforts to provide professional development and learning opportunities to teachers, school leaders, and other specialized personnel in schools and districts.

Office for Civil Rights: \$163.8 M -to ensure that the complaints filed by students with disabilities and their families are investigated and that schools meet their civil rights obligations under IDEA and Section 504.

Office of Postsecondary Education: Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID) Model Demonstrations, TPSID National Coordination Center (NCC) and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities—National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center (PPSID-NTAD): \$13.8 M

Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights (PAIR) program: \$25 M -to support the protection and advocacy system in each state to protect the legal and human rights of individuals with disabilities.

American Printing House for the Blind (APH): \$53.43 M -to develop innovative products and technology to support people who are blind and low-vision so they can independently live and learn.

Assistive Technology Act Programs: \$42 M -to support State and Territory assistive technology (AT) programs funded to expand access, and increase the acquisition of AT for people with disabilities.

School Based Mental Health Services Professionals and School Based Mental Health Services grants: \$250 M, equally divided -to increase the number of school based credentialed mental health professionals so that all students can thrive in safe and supportive schools.



Concerns with moving IDEA and other Education Programs to HHS:

CCD is deeply troubled by the prospect that programs supporting students with disabilities could be moved to other agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We do not support such proposals because the Department holds the specific authority from Congress as well as the expertise to support key programs that provide a necessary ecosystem to improve access to education and employment for students with disabilities. Through the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), the Office of Special Education (OSEP), the Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA) as well as Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the Department provides expertise and resources including leading research initiatives, providing technical assistance, collecting and reporting data, developing inter-departmental guidance, and other functions essential to helping states and districts meet IDEA's requirements. The Department also provides central leadership and direction on education policy, ensuring that services are streamlined and accessible. Additionally, the Department's OCR safeguards the education and civil rights of students with disabilities by investigating patterns of discrimination, including the rampant abuse and school use of restraint and seclusion that impacts millions of children with disabilities in schools nationwide. Moving IDEA responsibilities to multiple federal agencies would create unnecessary complexity and confusion, particularly for families navigating the educational system.

As CCD told House and Senate appropriators and authorizers on April 4, 2025,

Members of Congress and others have proposed transferring functions authorized by IDEA to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations. This shift is unacceptable for these reasons:

1. **Separating Students with Disabilities from Educational Support:** Moving IDEA programs to HHS would promote a medical model of disability, segregating students from essential school-based resources. The Department of Education, not HHS, holds the necessary authority and expertise to support programs for students with disabilities. HHS is not equipped to collaborate with state education agencies or provide the critical technical assistance parents need, which is currently facilitated through the state and regional Parent Training and Information (PTI) networks.
2. **Disconnecting Students from Bipartisan Education Programs:** Most students with disabilities are in general education, and IDEA must be integrated with other federal education laws, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Carl D. Perkins Act, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and the Higher Education Act. These laws support educational equity and access for students with disabilities, ensuring they have the same opportunities for education, career training, and employment as their peers.

Any proposal to dismantle the Department of Education is shortsighted and harmful. Students with disabilities should remain supported by an agency focused on their academic and career success. Furthermore, with recent staff cuts and restructuring at HHS, transferring IDEA programs there would be irresponsible... For decades, Congress has worked in a bipartisan manner to align federal education laws and funding to ensure students with disabilities have access to the same opportunities as others. We urge you not to dismantle this system. CCD strongly urges you to protect students with disabilities from policy proposals that would undermine the Department of Education and reduce funding for critical



education and civil rights laws. Such actions would have lasting, negative consequences for students, families, educators, and the future of children with disabilities. (See: CCD Letter, April 4, 2025 at: https://c-c-d.org/fichiers/CCD--letter-NO-to-dismantle_move-IDEA-to-HHS.pdf)

CCD strongly believes that IDEA is a bedrock law that ensures equal educational opportunities for all children with disabilities. This law and the related education and access programs we've included in our recommendations require robust federal support to help states meet IDEA's requirements and support individualized educational access and pathways to employment for students with disabilities. To ensure these positive outcomes are attainable, it is imperative that you support and increase annual funding, as well as provide the detailed funding allocations in the FY 2026 statute to help states and districts meet the growing needs of students with disabilities.

Finally, we urge Congress to take no action that would promote the dismantling of the Department in FY 2026 appropriations bills or any other legislative measures. The Department is critical to the proper implementation of IDEA and oversight of Section 504 and other essential education laws aligned to support students with disabilities. Any action to undermine or curtail this agency would undermine the rights and opportunities of 9.5 million students with disabilities across the nation.

Thank you for considering our recommendations as you begin work on the FY2026 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies.

Sincerely,

Access Ready, Inc.

Allies for Independence

American Foundation for the Blind

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA)

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Autism Society of America

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

CAST

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder



Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)
Disability Belongs
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children (DLD)
Epilepsy Foundation of America
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National PLACE
Perkins School for the Blind
School Social Work Association of America
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
The Advocacy Institute
The Arc of the United States
The Center for Learner Equity
Tourette Association of America

cc: House and Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee members

The CCD Education Task Force leads, advocates for, and monitors federal legislation and regulations that address the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities and their families, including policy efforts affecting the funding and implementation of federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We advocate for high expectations for the 9.5 million children with disabilities under these and related laws to ensure the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.



**CONSORTIUM FOR CONSTITUENTS
WITH DISABILITIES**