



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

July 16, 2012

The Honorable Denny Rehberg
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
2448 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing on behalf of the Education Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. The Task Force objects to the extension of an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) related to the definition of highly qualified teachers in the FY 2013 Continuing Resolution (CR) to be considered by the Committee.

The provision we oppose was included in the FY2011 CR and amends the ESEA to allow teachers in the *midst of their preparation* to be called "highly qualified" teachers despite that fact that *they are not fully prepared to be teachers*. The regulation has been determined to be in violation of the statute by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and in May 2012 the Court reaffirmed its ruling. This policy supports inequitable distribution of unqualified teachers to our most at-risk students and has a disproportionate impact on students with disabilities.

The ongoing lowering of standards related to highly qualified teachers will negatively impact students with disabilities. Research shows that students with disabilities thrive when receiving instruction from fully certified special education teachers. An Institute for Education Sciences study of all Florida teachers (Feng & Sass, 2010) found that fully certified special education teachers generate superior student learning gains as compared to special education teachers who are not fully certified. The current amendment has opened the floodgates for more and more uncertified special education teachers to serve students with disabilities.

We also know that more than half of students with disabilities participate in general education classrooms 80% or more of the school day. General education teachers need additional preparation in order to ensure that they are skilled in working with students with disabilities. A few weeks of training is not enough preparation for a teacher to be skilled in utilizing universal design for learning, differentiating instructional strategies, managing challenging behaviors and providing educational supports to a diverse classroom – especially in our most underserved, under resourced schools. As more students with disabilities participate in general education classrooms, it is critical that all teachers have increased preparation and skill, not less. Being an effective teacher for a student with any disability requires sophisticated skill and is not mastered in a 5 week boot camp.

The CCD joins a coalition of over 85 national advocacy organizations to say that you must not support the continuation of bad teaching practice. Our students deserve better. We urge you to reconsider your position and reject the inclusion of any amendment lowering standards for teachers in the CR.

Sincerely,

The Advocacy Institute
The Arc
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism National Committee
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
Easter Seals
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association
Learning Disabilities Association of America
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 Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
School Social Work Association of America
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

For more information, please contact:

Katy Beh Neas, Easter Seals	202.347.3066	kneas@easterseals.com
Laura Kaloi, National Center for Learning Disabilities	703.476.4894	lkaloi@ncld.org
Cindy Smith, National Disability Rights Network	202-408-9514	cindy.smith@ndrn.org

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of nearly 100 national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations headquartered in Washington, D.C. Since 1973, the CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 54 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society.