

March 7, 2006

Dear Senate Budget Committee Member:

We, the undersigned members of the Education Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), are writing to respectfully request that you provide a fiscal year 2007 302(b) allocation to the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Subcommittees Appropriations subcommittee sufficient to get Congress on the path towards fully funding all parts of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by fiscal year 2011 .

When Congress originally enacted P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975, Congress authorized the federal government to pay 40 percent of each state's "excess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, Congressional funding for IDEA has decreased from 18.6 percent to just 17.8 percent for fiscal year 2006. The President's fiscal year 2007 request takes a further step backward and puts IDEA funding at just 17 percent! As a result, local communities and states have been forced to pay a higher proportion of the special education costs. But ultimately, children and families are the ones who are being shortchanged.

In addition, funding for Part C that supports early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families and the Section 619 preschool programs, has been consistently frozen or cut in the last several years, despite the fact that year after year there is an increase the numbers of young children with disabilities and their families needing and receiving services under these important programs. States and communities continue to absorb significant shares of these costs and are struggling to continue to offer these important readiness services.

Investments to support IDEA Part D programs that promote research and 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 as well, often frozen year to year. 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 No Child Left Behind and IDEA.

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

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of People with Disabilities

American Council of the Blind
American Counseling Association
American Music Therapy Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Society for Deaf Children
Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Brain Injury Association of America
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorders
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
Easter Seals
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Mental Health Association
The Arc of the United States
United Cerebral Palsy