



Taking Action through speaking to your legislators

As professionals in our field we can impact the decision-making process in many ways. Knowing how to approach and communicate with your local, state and federal legislators is one very important step.

Here are several steps/tips to consider when communicating with government decision makers:

Preliminary Steps-

Identify them- Use the legislator identifier system nationally or for your state. For example, the US Congress link is found through govtrack.us and in Kentucky this link is located at legislative.ky.gov.

Nationally you can access through the Legislative Action Center on CEC at <http://cqrcengage.com/cek/?0> and identify your Senators and Representatives

Do your research- Know the issues and budget implications. Stay up to date on action items or legislative priorities using your state bill tracker system if available. For example, in Kentucky the LRC news email or through Kentucky Youth Advocates Bill Tracker at kyyouth.org/bill-tracker.

Follow your legislators on social media and through state advocacy organizations.

Schedule a meeting in advance with your legislator. Remember they want to hear from their constituents and your views are important to them.

Communicating with your Legislator-

1. Either through your scheduled appointment or by way of a letter, communicate with your identified Senator and/or Representative.
2. Let them know who you represent (if with DEC or state subdivision), what issues you are concerned about (e.g. Fully Fund Early Childhood IDEA, Increase CCAP \$ to support working families select quality child care, Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect) and any data to support policy changes and provide funding.
3. Know that their time is limited and therefore be aware of their time constraints such as when they are in session. Be brief (15-20 min) when possible and offer something (no more than 1 page) in writing to remember you, your concerns and how to contact you if they want to follow up with you.



of the Council for Exceptional Children

4. Share a story or real experiences to make your point stick, (e.g. Child in your classroom with significant disabilities received a communication device that allowed him to participate in daily learning activities and assisted his parents in understanding his wants and needs at home). Provide copy of picture where permission obtained by parent to share so that it can be left with the legislator.

If writing your Legislator, consider a brief concise letter that addresses a point or two (do not try to cram too much into your letter). Here is the example letter addressing fully funding early childhood special education or IDEA through the LAC:

As a constituent, I urge you to cosponsor and support the Funding Early Childhood is the Right IDEA Act (H.R. 4107), a bill to provide full funding for special education services for young children with disabilities. In 1986, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized to create the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities. Currently, IDEA Part C and Section 619 Preschool Programs serve over 1.16 million children. Children rely on these services to support their physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development. Unfortunately, funding has not kept pace with need, resulting in a burden on state and local tax systems.

The number of young children requiring the services IDEA provides has been increasing at a faster rate than the funding the programs are receiving. Adjusted for inflation, per-child funding for IDEA Part C and Section 619 has decreased by more than 64%. Moreover, research indicates that intervening at the earliest age can improve outcomes for children with disabilities due to cost savings from decreased grade repetition, reduced special education spending, enhanced productivity, increased tax revenues, and lower juvenile justice costs.

The Funding Early Childhood is the Right IDEA Act is designed to address this significant gap in federal funding for IDEA Part C and the 619 Preschool Grant Program. It would authorize the creation of a 5-year glide path of increases in the authorization levels of these two programs. The bill would ensure the availability of IDEA early childhood programs in every community throughout the United States and universal access to high-quality learning opportunities. Overall, the bill would support millions of children and their families on the path to independence. Please cosponsor and support the Funding Early Childhood is the Right IDEA Act (H.R. 4107) to ensure that young children with disabilities receive high-quality early intervention and the preschool special education services they deserve, as promised by IDEA.

Thank you for considering my request to cosponsor the Funding Early Childhood is the Right IDEA Act (H.R. 4107).

Tips for Meeting with Your Legislator

Meet with your legislators to discuss issues in more detail.



Meeting with Senator Jarod Carpenter - January 2020