



April 15, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services and Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services and Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray,
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD), an international organization composed of professionals who represent diverse disciplines, is committed to enhancing the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities across the life span. CLD is a member of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Education Task Force (CCD). In concert with CCD, CLD urges you to invest additional funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the next stimulus bill.

More than seven million school-aged students, approximately 13% of the total student enrollment, are currently entitled to individualized education and related services mandated by IDEA. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the impact of the historic and continuous gross underfunding of IDEA. During this pandemic, the historic underfunding of IDEA has exacerbated the great strain already placed on state and local education systems. State and school districts are being forced to make difficult budget decisions and some districts have chosen to cease all education services to all children, including children with disabilities. We believe it is imperative that Congress help states meet their obligations and provide school leaders and educators with resources to provide educational services and supports to students served under IDEA. **We strongly recommend the following additional appropriations be included within the next COVID-19 stimulus bill:**

1. IDEA Part B: Invest \$11.3 billion

An additional investment in Part B state grants would help states develop the technology, additional personnel, and immediate technical assistance to state and local schools systems to adjust to the new, and possibly, long-term reality of providing a free and appropriate public education to students across the nation who are sheltering at home. This would include the

planning for recovery and compensatory services when students are able to safely go back to school.

2. IDEA Part C: Invest \$500 million; IDEA Part B Section 619: Invest \$400 million

IDEA's early childhood programs serve over 1 million infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities and their families through Part C and Part B Section 619, respectively. Over the last twenty years, both programs have increased the number of children served by approximately 50% and have proven that this early intervention leads to improved outcomes. These children and their families will require extra support as they navigate important developmental milestones with their children including for 3-year old children transitioning from Part C to preschool programs.

3. IDEA Part D: Invest \$300 million

Part D of IDEA is comprised of essential national activities that provide critical support and form a network of high-quality resources critical to the effective implementation of Parts B and C. These programs prepare the special education workforce, support parents and families with training and information, promote the deployment of technology and the implementation of evidence-based research. Congress must invest in Part D paying particular attention to ensuring a skilled workforce of special educators to meet the requirements of IDEA during the pandemic.

This funding is *critical to help offset the enormous costs incurred by schools and districts as they make investments in technology products, services, and personnel training in their move to provide distance education*. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted on March 27 provided no dedicated funding for serving students with disabilities. Instead, state education agencies, school districts, and governors have considerable discretion in how to apportion \$13 billion among various authorized uses for elementary and secondary education, such as cleaning and sanitizing schools, purchasing educational technology, and providing emergency funding for food, housing, and other basic essentials.

In addition, the amount of funding for elementary and secondary education provided by the CARES Act pales in comparison to the amount provided by the 2009 economic stimulus law. That law, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), recognized the critical importance of education to economic recovery and provided \$100 billion for K-12 education, with \$12.2 billion (1.5%) specifically for IDEA programs out of the \$787 billion measure. By contrast, total elementary and secondary education funding under CARES is well under 1% of the \$2 trillion total.

CLD strongly urges you to significantly increase IDEA funding as part of the next COVID-19 stimulus bill. We must work together to ensure that schools have adequate resources to serve every child with a disability and provide equitable educational opportunities to all.

Sincerely,

Lindy Crawford, Ph.D.

President, Council for Learning Disabilities

<https://council-for-learning-disabilities.org>

Debi Gartland, Ph.D.

Co-Chair Liaison Committee, Council for Learning Disabilities

Roberta Strosnider, Ed.D.

Co-Chair Liaison Committee, Council for Learning Disabilities