

October 27, 2011

House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative,

The undersigned organizations represent a coalition of education organizations dedicated to advocating for the full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). On behalf of students with disabilities, teachers, specialized instructional support professionals, parents and administrators, we are writing to thank you for the proposed higher investment in IDEA—including an increase of more than \$1.2 billion—in the House FY12 LHHS appropriations bill.

By providing \$12.7 billion for IDEA in FY12, the House proposal bumps the federal contribution from 16.1 percent to 17.3 percent of the authorized 40 percent, one of the larger increases IDEA will have experienced through regular appropriations in recent memory.

Since its inception, IDEA has protected students with disabilities by ensuring access to a free and appropriate public education. The original statute included a Congressional promise to pay 40 percent of the National Average per Pupil Expenditure. While special education funding has received significant increases over the past fifteen years, including the one-time infusion of IDEA dollars in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, funding has leveled off recently and even been cut. Additionally, federal funding has never come close to reaching the promised 40%, causing states and local school districts to find ways to pay for needed services.. Many times, this means increasing local taxes, which is an especially high burden in times of fiscal austerity and uncertainty.

The House FY12 LHHS appropriations bill is a step in the right direction toward helping Congress realize its special education funding commitment and if enacted the investment in IDEA will help every single local school district across this nation meet the needs of all students. Therefore, we strongly support the proposed funding level for IDEA and urge you to maintain this amount without negatively impacting funding for other education programs. IDEA is the major—but not sole—vehicle for providing education to students with disabilities. In fact, students with disabilities are general education students first, with nearly two-thirds of students with disabilities spending at least 80 percent of their time in a general education setting. Investing in education is the right thing for our students today and our nation's future. We appreciate your commitment to fulfilling Congress's original promise to IDEA and encourage you to provide the funding needed for all education programs.

Thank you for your leadership on the funding of IDEA, and we very much appreciate your efforts in helping Congress work toward meeting its IDEA funding commitment.

Sincerely,

American Association of School Administrators
American Speech Hearing Association
National School Boards Association

National Education Association
Council for Exceptional Children
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of Secondary School Principals