



2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000 | Arlington, VA 22202-3557
(P) +1.703.620.3660 | (Toll Free) 888.232.7733 | (TTY) 866.915.5000 | (F) 703.264.9494
www.cec.sped.org

March 20, 2012

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C., 20005

Dear Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the almost seven million children and youth with disabilities and the professionals who serve them, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) writes to thank you for your letter dated March 19, 2012, highlighting the importance of funding the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and urging appropriators to fund this important program. You have consistently called on your fellow legislators to uphold the federal government's promise to students with disabilities, their families, the educators who serve them and our nation at large. We appreciate your commitment to this issue and your willingness to use your voice to support it.

While much work remains to ensure that children and youth with disabilities are held to the highest standards and achieve at high levels, federal funding and commitment to IDEA has improved the lives of millions. Today, almost six out of ten students with disabilities graduate high school with a regular diploma – that is twice the percentage of 25 years ago. As you know, closing the achievement gap for opens up needed opportunities for future employment and independent living. Yet despite this progress, Congress and the Administration are considering reducing funding for IDEA – to lower than the 2001 level. We cannot expect schools to maintain the current services and ensure that students succeed without federal support – without the ability to pay teachers, hire specialists, provide assistive technology and capture the untapped potential of our nation's students. It is essential for the federal government to live up to its commitment and fully fund IDEA and CEC applauds you for your comments.

Thank you again and we look forward to working with you in the coming months to ensure our schools are well equipt to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities.

Sincerely,



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Deborah A. Ziegler

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Associate Executive Director
Policy and Advocacy Services
Council for Exceptional Children