



3100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 600 | Arlington, VA 22201-5332
(P) + 1.703.620.3660 | (Toll Free) 888.232.7733 | (TTY) 866.915.5000 | (F) 703.264.9494
cec.sped.org

November 18, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, HHS, Education & Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), I am writing to urge you to provide the maximum amount possible to support students with exceptionalities in a final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 appropriations package.

As you may know, CEC is a professional association comprised of over 26,000 educators dedicated to advancing the success of students with exceptionalities, which accomplishes its mission through advocacy, standards, and professional development. CEC advocates for evidence-based best practices in special education and supports for educators at all levels, including administrators, from early intervention through higher education.

CEC, our members, and partners within the special education community have advocated for meaningful increases to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Javits Gifted and Talented program in FY 2021. Specifically, we requested:

- No less than \$14 billion for IDEA Part B;
- \$975 million for IDEA Part C;
- \$684 million for IDEA Part B Section 619;
- \$254 million for IDEA Part D;
- \$70 million for the National Center for Special Education Research; and
- \$32 million for the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented grants program.

This has been an extraordinarily challenging year for special educators. I have been heartened by the creativity and commitment of our members to ensure the delivery of instruction and support services, whether online, in-person or through a hybrid approach. Despite the many pressing stressors on teachers and families, special educators have risen to the challenges of educating during a pandemic, working overtime to figure out innovative ways to reach their students, who have in many cases been the most impacted by changes to education settings, routines, and the virus itself.



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However, IDEA has been chronically underfunded since its enactment, significantly hampering our field, and contributing to the special educator shortage crisis. We can also anticipate the perpetuation of significant pandemic-related challenges without emergency action. Thus, CEC has also pushed for a much-needed emergency, one-time appropriation of \$12.5 billion for IDEA, as you know. We are now five weeks into FY 2021 and roughly nine months into a pandemic that is rapidly getting worse again. The pressure on our education system is both unprecedented and overwhelming. Congress has the power to help and I urge you to do so immediately.

It is paramount that Congress provide the maximum increase possible for programs that support students with exceptionalities so that educators and students are supported during this pandemic and beyond.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer J. Lesh".

Jennifer J. Lesh, Ph.D.
President
Council for Exceptional Children