

## California Student Honored with International Award

Arlington, Va., February [XX], 2024 – Helena Donato-Sapp of Long Beach, California, received the 2024 Yes I Can Award for Academics from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Helena will be honored this March along with other Yes I Can recipients at the CEC Convention and Expo in San Antonio, Texas.

The Yes I Can Awards celebrate and honor the achievements of children and youth with exceptionalities while increasing public awareness of the abilities and aspirations of students with disabilities.

Helena uses her lived experience as a youth with multiple learning disabilities to advocate for disability justice, disability pride, and anti-bullying. She has written on confronting ableism and has been published in several peer-reviewed journals, including *Equity & Excellence in Education*. Helena has also written chapters about the impact of bullying and how schools should confront it and is an editor for “The Feminist Focus Blog” from Girls Learn International.

“A large part of my work is around disability pride because I believe that my learning disabilities are a gift I bring to the school and world community. I refuse to carry any veil of shame, and I lift my head up high about my disabilities.” Says Helena.

She works in partnership with the National Education Association on a campaign entitled “Become a Champion for Disability Rights and Inclusion” and speaks nationwide about this campaign. She has established herself as a sought-after keynote speaker and delivered the keynote address to a conference of over 9,000 educators.

Previously, she’s been recognized for her extensive activism work, having been named a 2022 D-30 Disability Impact Honoree and awarded the 2023-2024 Huemann-Armstrong Award and 16 Under 16 in STEM. Her anti-bully work has been highlighted on The Disney Channel and The Discovery Channel.

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The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to high-quality education that is inclusive and equitable for individuals with disabilities. Learn more about CEC at <https://exceptionalchildren.org/>.