



3100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 600 | Arlington, VA 22201-5332

(P) + 1.703.620.3660 | (Toll Free) 888.232.7733 | (F) 703.264.9494

exceptionalchildren.org

May 15, 2024

Chairwoman Tammy Baldwin
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
And Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
And Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Robert Aderholt
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
And Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
And Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), I urge you to prioritize programs that impact students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents as you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill and ensure that all education programs are well funded.

CEC is a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. CEC has been a longstanding, leading voice in support of full funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), considered to be 40 percent of average per pupil expenditures (APPE). The federal share of APPE has dropped from 18 percent at its peak between 2004 and 2006, to less than 11 percent for Fiscal Year 2024, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Fully funding IDEA would ensure Congress's intent that infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities are provided access to educators trained to provide specially designed instruction, intervention, support, curricula, assistive technology, and related services that allow them to meet the highest possible outcomes.

A healthy federal investment in the programs and personnel that support people with disabilities and/or gifts and talents is critical to ensuring infants, toddlers, children, and youth thrive in school and beyond. Unfortunately, IDEA programs have been woefully and consistently underfunded, creating immense challenges that impact learners, educators, schools, and districts. Additionally, operating within the caps for FY 2025 set forth by the Fiscal Responsibility Act, education programs could face a cut next fiscal year. Rather than decrease federal education funding, schools and districts need the meaningful and sustained investments promised to them by Congress to fully support infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. These investments cannot be made at the expense of other federal investments in education, as the whole system must be well funded in order to operate as intended.

Thus, CEC respectfully requests support for the following in FY 2025:

IDEA Part B State Grants (Sec. 611) – Invest no less than \$16.3 billion:

According to the U.S. Department of Education, an estimated 7.9 million school-aged students benefit from individualized special education and related services mandated by IDEA. The law requires that



3100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 600 | Arlington, VA 22201-5332

(P) + 1.703.620.3660 | (Toll Free) 888.232.7733 | (F) 703.264.9494

exceptionalchildren.org

schools tailor services to meet the specific needs of each child. With the enactment of IDEA came a Federal government pledge to pay 40% of the excess cost of educating a student with a disability, what is referred to as IDEA full funding. Unfortunately, the Federal share is only approximately 10.7%, leaving states and school districts to pay the balance. This causes great strain on education systems, which are forced to make difficult budget decisions to make up for the Federal shortfall. A \$16.3 billion investment in FY 2025 would represent the first step of a 10-year glidepath to full funding for Section 611. This important increase would enable states and districts to provide important investments, including critical investments in special educators and specialized instructional support personnel, to carry out IDEA.

IDEA Part C – Invest \$932 million; IDEA Part B Section 619 – Invest \$503 million:

IDEA's early childhood programs serve approximately 1 million infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children with disabilities and their families through Part C and Part B Section 619, respectively. Early intervention for children in their first few years of life is one of the most effective strategies for improving development and learning outcomes. A longitudinal study shows that more than 40 percent of children receiving early intervention services do not go on to require special education services in elementary school, both improving outcomes and lowering education costs in kindergarten and beyond. Despite positive outcomes for children and education systems, federal funding has failed to keep pace with an increase in the number of children served. In fact, the federal cost per child has decreased over the last two decades. Increasing the availability of these programs in FY 2025 would support more infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families, and provide long-term cost savings.

IDEA Part D Personnel Preparation (Sec. 662) - Invest \$300 million:

Special education represents the highest educator shortage area in nearly all states. The persistent shortage of special educators, early interventionists, and specialized instructional support personnel hampers access to education, services, and supports for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities who rely on these qualified personnel to reach their potential. Congress must address this through a significant increase to Part D Sec. 662, which helps increase the number of qualified special education personnel and provides professional learning in the critical early years of a special educator's career.

National Center for Special Education Research - Invest \$70 million:

The National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER), within the Institute of Education Sciences, is the primary driver of special education research in the nation and disseminates evidence-based practices to classroom teachers. Infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities have made remarkable gains since the enactment of IDEA, but despite these gains an achievement gap persists among children and youth with disabilities compared to their peers without disabilities. There remains a critical need to advance research that results in improved outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly those who experience persistent, severe, and co-occurring academic and behavioral problems. NCSER has been underfunded for over a decade, limiting its capacity to award grants to high-scoring applicants and to sponsor innovative research. Increasing funding for NCSER is essential to providing special educators with scientifically based practices to advance the high expectations established under IDEA, resulting in successful outcomes for people with disabilities.

Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Grants - Invest \$32 million:



3100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 600 | Arlington, VA 22201-5332

(P) + 1.703.620.3660 | (Toll Free) 888.232.7733 | (F) 703.264.9494

exceptionalchildren.org

The Javits Act seeks to address the “excellence gap” that exists at the top achievement levels. The Javits Act supports research and development to better identify and serve gifted and talented students, including students with disabilities and other students from underserved backgrounds. This program, which ensures every student at the top achievement levels has the same opportunity to succeed, is overlooked and undervalued, but is critically important to supporting underserved gifted and talented students. It is in the national interest to foster and encourage learners at top achievement levels.

School-Based Mental Health Professionals- Invest \$250 million:

Professionals from all areas of special education within the CEC membership cite mental health as the most pressing area where they are in need of more support. Meeting the mental health needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth is critical to ensuring positive academic and developmental outcomes. Providing access to high-quality mental health services and supports is contingent on having dedicated, highly qualified school mental health professionals, yet our nation faces severe shortages of school-based mental health professionals - school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Recent studies demonstrate a trend in rising mental health challenges for students, and Congress has been responsive to this crisis in a bipartisan manner by channeling funding to the School-Based Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration Grant Program and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program. We urge you to build on recent success in this area.

As you determine your priorities for FY 2025, I urge you to work with your colleagues to grow public school funding, and specifically increase funding for programs and the personnel that support infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. Furthermore, I urge you to reject any proposed cuts to education spending, which would be a detriment to American children, our values, and our future. Please make the education of people with disabilities and the educators and specialists who serve them a top priority.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad Rummel".

Chad Rummel
Executive Director
Council for Exceptional Children