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AND THE WORKFORCE

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April 29, 2014

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
2358B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Kingston and Ranking Members Lowey and DeLauro:

As you begin writing fiscal year (FY) 2015 appropriations bills, we request you address the urgent needs of special needs children, their families, and their educators. We request the FY 2015 *Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act* provide \$13 billion for Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). This would provide \$1.5 billion more than is allocated in FY 2014 and increase the federal government's contribution to special education costs to approximately 18 percent of the average per pupil expenditure, matching the highest level of sustained support provided by Congress.

In 1975, Congress mandated educational access and services for students with special needs, with the promise that significant federal investments would support states and school districts in meeting their obligations to these children. The precursor to IDEA, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, authorized federal funding up to 40 percent of the additional cost of educating students with disabilities. Unfortunately, federal contributions have never approached that goal.

Congress did, however, make significant progress toward this goal in fiscal years 1995 through 2005. Large increases in Part B funding during those years more than doubled the federal contribution to the cost of educating students with disabilities, from under 8 percent to more than 18 percent. Regrettably, the last decade has brought steady decreases in the federal contribution. In

The Honorable Harold Rogers
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Jack Kingston
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
April 29, 2014
Page 2

FY 2014, the federal government is covering just 16 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure.

This decline in funding has profound consequences for children with disabilities and their peers. School districts struggle to offer special needs students the necessary placements, supports, and services they deserve. General education budgets are cut to make up the shortfall, shortchanging all students of the high-quality education they need to succeed in school and in life. The attached chart highlights this reality.

Although our requested increase still falls short of the federal government's commitment to special needs children, such a meaningful increase would generate significant new funding for all states and districts, giving policymakers and educators more freedom to use state and local funds to strengthen general and special education in their communities.

As our nation struggles with debt levels that have eclipsed the size of the entire U.S. economy, difficult choices must be made. We must stop wasting taxpayer dollars on new and ineffective programs and instead work toward meeting our basic obligation to ensure special needs children are prepared for success after high school. We urge you to renew Congress's commitment to these students, their families, and their educators.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and continued commitment to this effort. We stand ready to work with you in this invaluable endeavor.

Sincerely,



JOHN KLINE
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce



TODD ROKITA
Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education



CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS
Chair
House Republican Conference



PETE SESSIONS
Chairman
Committee on Rules

The Honorable Harold Rogers
The Honorable Nita Lowey
The Honorable Jack Kingston
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
April 29, 2014
Page 3

Cc:

Rep. Steve Womack, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Chuck Fleischmann, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. David Joyce, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Andy Harris, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Martha Roby, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Chris Stewart, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Barbara Lee, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Rep. Mike Honda, Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies