

Senator Jon Tester  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Chris Van Hollen  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 13, 2018

Dear Senator Tester and Senator Van Hollen:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing a coalition of education organizations dedicated to fulfilling the funding promise for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), we write to express our strong support for the IDEA Full Funding Act, set to be introduced in the U.S. Senate the week of March 12.

We thank you for your continued leadership on this important issue. Since its inception in 1975, IDEA has protected students with disabilities by ensuring access to a free appropriate public education. At the time the statute was enacted, Congress promised to pay 40 percent of the National Average per Pupil Expenditure. While special education funding has received significant increases over the past 17 years, federal funding has leveled off recently and has even been cut. The closest the federal government has come to reaching its 40 percent commitment was 18 percent in 2005.

Investing in IDEA, a federal flagship formula program designed to help level the education playing field for students with disabilities, is an investment in our nation's students and their future. It indicates that Congress is serious in keeping its word to help school districts support all students. Our organizations strongly support full federal funding for IDEA. IDEA is the major—but not sole—vehicle for providing education to students with disabilities. In fact, students with disabilities are general education students first, with nearly two-thirds of students with disabilities spending at least 80 percent of their time in a general education setting.

Your bill is an affirmation of the importance of Congress acting to keep its word, honoring its commitment to provide 40 percent of the additional costs associated with educating students with disabilities. Thank you for your leadership on the full funding of IDEA, and we very much appreciate your work to support efforts in Congress to move toward meeting its IDEA funding commitment. Please direct any questions to Noelle Ellerson Ng ([nellerson@aasa.org](mailto:nellerson@aasa.org)).

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Federation of Teachers  
Association of Educational Service Agencies  
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents  
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)  
Council for Exceptional Children

Council of Administrators of Special Education  
Council of Great City Schools  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Education Association  
National PTA  
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium  
National Rural Education Association  
National School Boards Association  
School Social Work Association of America