

June 13, 2007

Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), I am writing to share our views on the Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill approved by the Subcommittee last week. NASDSE is the not-for-profit organization that represents the state directors of special education in the states, the District of Columbia, federal entities and the Freely Associated States.

NASDSE is pleased that the Subcommittee's bill reflects strong support for increased federal funding for education programs, including restoring funding for many programs, such as the school counseling program, that were not funded in the President's budget.

We are pleased that the Subcommittee increased funding for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), although federal funding for IDEA remains at just 17.2 percent, far below the 40 percent promised decades ago but remain disappointed that the Subcommittee decided to level-fund other key components of IDEA, including the Part C Infants and Toddlers program and Section 619, which funds pre-school programs for young children with disabilities.

Even more distressing is that the Subcommittee did not restore funding for a critical program under Part D of IDEA – the State Personnel Development Grants as was stipulated in the Appropriations Committee report, H. Rep. 109-515. This report, which accompanied the FY 07 4th Continuing Resolution, explicitly stated: ***The Committee intends to resume funding personnel development grants in fiscal year 2008 when existing funds are depleted*** (emphasis added). This program, which most recently was funded at \$50 million was not funded in the President's budget and was completely overlooked by the Subcommittee. It is the only program specifically targeted towards improving the capacity of special education personnel at the local level. Without this critical funding, states will have difficulty in helping local school districts ensure that all special education personnel meet the highly qualified personnel standards required by IDEA.

Finally, we regret that the Subcommittee failed to provide any funding for respite care grants. This modest program, for which we had hoped \$40 million would be appropriated, would provide needed services to those families who care for family members with severe disabilities (including Alzheimer's) in their own homes.

While NASDSE strongly supports much of the Subcommittee's mark, we urge the full committee to take steps to address our funding concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill East".

Bill East, Ed.D.
Executive Director