

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2015

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labor-HHS-Education and Related
Agencies Subcommittee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education and Related
Agencies Subcommittee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin work on the fiscal year 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to support funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to put us on the path to full federal funding within ten years.

In 1975, the original version of IDEA was enacted to ensure that all students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education. IDEA provides individual-specific programs, resources, and services for students with a wide range of disabilities, including hearing impairment, autism, language impairment, and learning disabilities. Currently, there are over 6.5 million children eligible for special education services under the disability categories of the IDEA. The comprehensive assessment and support services authorized by IDEA help to close the academic achievement gap and ensure a meaningful education for every student.

When IDEA passed, the federal government made a pledge to states and school districts to pay 40 percent of the Average Per Pupil Expenditure in IDEA Part B grants to states. In 2004, the reauthorization of IDEA reiterated this pledge, creating a “glide path” to reach the 40 percent commitment by 2011.

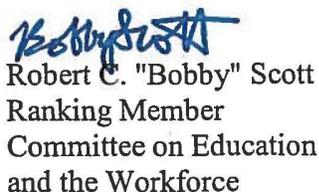
However, we have always fallen short of this commitment, with regular appropriations for IDEA Part B never reaching above 18.5 percent. Current funding for fiscal year 2015 is at just 16.1 percent. This shortfall exacerbates the long-running challenges facing states and local school districts, which are faced with limited resources and growing student populations. Significant funding in fiscal year 2016 for IDEA would help relieve budget pressures and provide much needed support for our teachers and school administrators who are working tirelessly to better the lives of all students in our communities through equal access to quality education.

We urge you to honor our commitment to students with disabilities and support funding in fiscal year 2016 for IDEA to put us on the path to full federal funding within ten years. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Education
and the Workforce



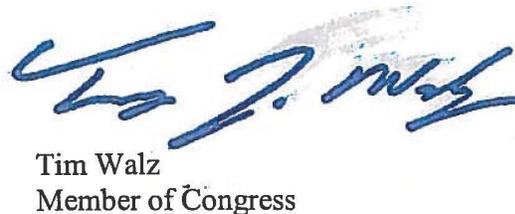
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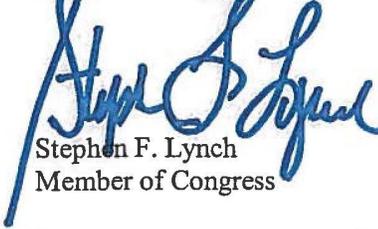

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