



September 9, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education & Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you work to finalize the FY 2020 appropriation bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), which represents the 1 in 5 individuals with learning and attention issues, urges you to put children, their families, and schools first by increasing spending levels for the programs that support them.

Children with learning and attention issues have brain-based issues that may cause trouble in reading, writing, math, organization, concentration, listening comprehension, social skills, motor skills or a combination of these. These children are in every classroom across the country and spend most of their time in general education settings, while many also received specialized instruction and support through our nation's special education program. Research confirms that when provided the right services and supports, children with learning and attention issues can and do thrive in school and life.

To support these students, their parents, and the teachers that educators who work with them, NCLD urges you to put forward a funding bill that invests in our children in the following ways:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

More than 40 years ago, Congress made a promise to our nation's children that it would fund 40% of the extra cost to educate children with disabilities. To this day, the funding level has never reached even half of that amount, consistently hovering around only 16% of the excess cost over the last few years. Yet, at the same time, the number of children with disabilities in our schools has steadily risen. Schools are left to bear the cost of providing an appropriate education to those students, while the federal government continues to fall far short on its promise.

- IDEA Part B Grants to States: NCLD requests an increase to \$13.97 billion for Part B State Grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In FY19, IDEA Part B was funded at \$12.36 billion. Since 2009, the average federal share per child has remained stagnant, while the number of students served and the national average per pupil expenditure (APPE) has continued to rise. The result is a declining federal contribution to the costs of educating students with disabilities.
- IDEA Part B Section 619 Preschool Grants and IDEA Part C: NCLD requests an increase to \$441.8 million for IDEA's Part B Section 619 and an increase to \$531 million for IDEA's Part C. In FY 19, IDEA Part B Section 619 was funded at \$391 million and Part C was funded at \$470 million.

IDEA's early childhood programs serve over 1 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families through Part C (the infant, toddlers, and families program) and Part B Section 619 (the 3-5 preschool program) respectively. Over the past 20 years, both programs have increased the number of children served by approximately 50 percent. Despite this growth and positive outcomes for children and their families, federal funding has failed to keep pace with the needs of these children.

- **IDEA Part D National Programs:** NCLD requests an increase to \$254 million for IDEA's Part D, which provide the infrastructure to implement programs for students with disabilities through necessary training and professional development for personnel, technical assistance, and more. In FY19, IDEA Part D was funded at \$225 million. Specifically, we urge Congress to fund the Technology and Media Centers program at no less than \$31.6 million and the Parent Information Centers at \$30.5 million.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Because the majority of children with learning and attention issues spend most of their time in general education classes, the quality of our schools and their general education programs matter greatly, including for students with disabilities. It is critical to invest in programs under ESSA that provide essential supports and services to all students, help prepare and support educators to meet the needs of their diverse classrooms, and provide resources to families.

- **ESSA Title I:** NCLD requests an increase to \$16.2 billion for Title I in ESSA, an investment that will positively impact the 25 million students in our nation's high poverty public schools and allow them greater opportunity and support to meet challenging state standards and experience academic success. This includes \$190 million for the Literacy for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) program, level funding from the FY19 enacted level.
- **ESSA Title II - Part A:** NCLD requests \$2.25 billion for Title II- Part A in ESSA to support teacher professional development, level funding from the FY19 enacted level.
- **ESSA Title IV - Part A:** NCLD requests \$1.6 billion for Title IV- Part A, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants in ESSA, a \$330 million increase to the FY19 enacted level.
- **ESSA Title IV - Part E:** \$20 million for Title IV - Part E, Statewide Family Engagement Centers in ESSA, a \$10 million increase to the FY19 enacted level.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

NCLD urges Congress to fund OCR at \$130 million, a \$5 million increase from the enacted FY19 level. This office is critical to the success and well-being of students with disabilities as it is responsible for enforcing laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age in all programs and institutions that receive funds from the Department.

Higher Education Act (HEA)

NCLD requests an increase to \$50 million for Teacher Quality Partnership Grants (TQP) under the Higher Education Act funding, a \$7 million increase to the FY19 enacted level. The TQP program funds competitive grants to partnerships of higher education institutions, high-need local school districts, and other stakeholders to transform and strengthen educator preparation. At the heart of the TQP program is a focus on deepening the partnership between Pre-K–12 and higher education as they collaborate to

prepare profession-ready educators in high-need fields. The program extends the clinical practice and includes the option of a residency for master's level programs, and TQP grantees evaluate the effectiveness of program graduates once they enter the classroom. Graduates of TQP residency programs agree to serve in a high-need school for three years, ensuring profession-ready teachers are serving where they are needed most.

Institute of Education Sciences (IES) - National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER)

NCLD calls on Congress to increase its investment in NCSER within the Institute of Education Sciences. Specifically, we urge you to provide \$670 million for the Institute of Education Sciences, a \$55 million increase to the FY19 enacted level including, and \$70 million for National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) funding, a \$14 million dollar increase to the FY19 enacted level. Funding for NCSER was significantly decreased in recent years and must be restored to its 2011 funding level of \$70 million. NCSER supports high quality and rigorous research on special education and related services and the full range of issues facing children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, school personnel, and more. Its findings help inform interventions, teaching strategies, and other critical factors in educating children with disabilities.

Head Start, including Early Head Start and Child Care Development Block Grants (CCDBG)

Currently, Head Start funding levels support less than half of eligible preschool-aged children and only 4 percent of those children eligible for Early Head Start. Increased funding is critical to ensuring that a greater number of children from low-income families have access to Head Start programs and a healthy start to life. Nearly 40 percent of children — 28.4 million — in the United States live in low-income households, and a staggering 20 percent of young children under age 6 live in poverty. This economic insecurity in childhood can create lifelong disadvantages for children, ranging from poor health to low achievement in school. Because the first five years of life are the most critical for learning and development, all young children — regardless of family income — need a strong beginning. Providing ample funding for Head Start will ensure that families have access to quality early care and education.

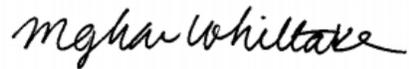
In addition, the demand for affordable, quality child care remains unmet. Only 1-in-6 eligible children nationwide is served by Child Care Development Block Grants funds. States continue to maintain large backlogs and wait lists of families in need of child care assistance that would allow them to work or pursue training opportunities. When child care is unaffordable and inaccessible, it impacts participation in the workforce and affects the nation's economy, specifically earnings, productivity and revenue. Quality affordable child care is out of reach for far too many of America's families. Today, child care costs average an estimated \$9,000-\$9,600 annually nationwide. This is equivalent to in-state tuition at a public college in 33 states. This amount also accounts for more than 10 percent of the median household income for married parents, and 37 percent of household income for single parents.

- **Head Start (Including Early Head Start):** NCLD requests total funding for Head Start at \$11.11 billion to meet existing needs—a meaningful increase of \$1.05 billion to the FY19 enacted level will address critical program improvements, equip staff with a trauma-informed approach, extend in-class duration where desired, and help retain a quality, experienced workforce. All funds appropriated to Head Start in FY20 should include a minimum of 4.5% set aside for Migrant and Seasonal programs and 3% for American Indian/Alaska Native programs, per the Head Start Act.

- Child Care Development Block Grants: NCLD requests total funding for CCDBG at \$10.3 billion, an increase of \$5 billion to the FY19 enacted level.

Thank you for your consideration and NCLD looks forward to working with Congress as you move forward with the fiscal year 2020 appropriations process. Please feel free to contact me at 202-464-2140 or mwhittaker@nclد.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Meghan C. Whittaker
Director of Policy & Advocacy
National Center for Learning Disabilities