



**National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) Calls on Congress to
Provide Robust Investments in Response to COVID-19:
*Recent Proposals Fall Far Short for Disability & School Communities***

WASHINGTON - March 23, 2020 - Our nation is facing an unprecedented public health crisis that calls for a swift and strong federal response — one that protects the most vulnerable among us. The most recent proposal put forth by Senate Republicans fell far short of providing what our students, their families, communities, and educators need and deserve. Now, Congress cannot wait any longer to work together and put forward a bipartisan bill that addresses the needs of its most vulnerable communities.

“With the outbreak of COVID-19, parents are navigating their new normal with children at home, jobs to keep, and serious concerns about nutrition and medical care,” said Lindsay Jones, president and CEO, NCLD. “At the same time, educators are wondering how to connect with and reach all of their students from a distance. Congress has failed to offer adequate solutions to these challenges and must act now.”

Perhaps most importantly for students with disabilities, the most recent Senate bill aimed to increase the Secretary of Education’s waiver authority, weakening civil rights protections for students under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the Every Student Succeeds Act, and more. However, “with the release of the most recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), it is abundantly clear that such waivers are not needed,” stated Jones. “In fact, the guidance offered many ways that ED will offer flexibility to states and districts within the bounds of IDEA. We don’t need waivers. Instead, what we need now is an investment in our schools.”

Every student deserves access to educational opportunities — even if that means virtual education during this pandemic. And if educators are expected to innovate and act nimbly during these unprecedented times, Congress must provide the resources schools and districts so desperately need to effectively design those learning opportunities and educate all students. “It’s clear that many schools and districts are finding innovative ways to serve students,” says Jones. “We must lift those examples up, learn from each other, and ensure that all schools, educators and families have the resources they need to succeed.”

Congress must lead. We cannot afford to wait. NCLD and its community of parents, educators, and advocates calls on Congress to invest substantial resources into schools and communities as they band together to navigate this new reality as safely as possible.

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