



August 17, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert "Bobby" Scott
Chairman
House Committee on Education and Labor
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Jason Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Budget
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Graham, Chairman Yarmuth, Ranking Member Smith,

As you work to finalize reconciliation legislation, 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 including funding for the programs that support them in the bill. We were pleased to see that the budget resolution passed by the Senate prioritized education funding and that the Senate HELP and House Education and Labor Committees received the largest instructions for spending. Nonetheless, we know that Members of Congress will face difficult decisions and, thus, we urge you to consider our recommendations for educational investments to include in the final reconciliation bill.

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 receive specialized instruction and support under our nation's special education law — the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. Young adults with learning and attention issues also often struggle to succeed in postsecondary education settings when they lack the appropriate supports. Research confirms that when provided the right services and supports, individuals with learning and attention issues can and do thrive in school and life. The budget reconciliation bill pending in Congress presents an opportunity to put our country on a path to guaranteeing an equitable and excellent education for each and every student by investing in comprehensive educator preparation programs and postsecondary education student support programs.

Investments Comprehensive Educator Preparation

Before the pandemic, nearly every state in the nation [reported shortages of teachers](#) in high-need areas, including special education. These shortages and gaps in access to certified and experienced teachers were concentrated in schools that serve students of color and students from low-income families. The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) demonstrates that schools with high enrollments of students of color [are four times](#) as likely to employ uncertified teachers as schools with low enrollment of students of color. In schools with the greatest concentration of students of color, special education teachers [are 80% more likely to turn over](#) than in schools with the lowest concentration of students of color. For students with disabilities, students of color, and students from low-income families, the inequitable access to a well-prepared, diverse, supported, and stable educator workforce translates into a denial of the opportunities necessary to learn in non-discriminatory learning environments. Where there are high concentrations of inexperienced teachers or underprepared teachers [there are higher](#) suspensions rates. [CRDC data show](#) that students with disabilities, students of color and other historically underserved students disproportionately face harsh discipline like suspensions and expulsions.

We urge you to support President Biden's proposed \$9 billion investment in a well-prepared and diverse educator workforce. The President's proposals in this area have support from Senators as evidenced by the deficit neutral reserve fund proposed by Senators Hassan (D-NH) and Kaine (D-VA) during the Senate consideration of the FY 2022 budget resolution. The specific proposals from the President that have our support include:

1. [Providing \\$900 million to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\), Part D's personnel preparation program to support the comprehensive preparation of special educators.](#) The latest data show [48 states and DC](#) have special educator shortages. IDEA Part D's personnel preparation program (IDEA-D-PP) is specifically designed to address our country's chronic special educator shortage by investing in comprehensive educator preparation programs focused on preparing special educators, specialized instructional support personnel, and postsecondary educators that support their training. It is important to note that the well-known IDEA Part B program (the state grant program) cannot be used to prepare new special educators. IDEA-D-PP's annual funding, [which this year is below 2010 levels](#), is far from meeting the high demand for skilled special educators, making this investment all the more important.

2. [Creating a \\$1.6 billion fund to help teachers earn additional certifications in high-demand subjects and in certifications that are associated with greater effectiveness](#). While many teachers are ready to obtain certifications in high-need subjects, costs can be a barrier. We also know that shortages of certified teachers disproportionately impact schools that serve high percentages of students of color and students whose families are experiencing low incomes. Further, there is insufficient systematic financial support for teachers to pursue advanced certifications that are associated with greater effectiveness, like National Board Certification. The proposed \$1.6 billion “Answer the Call – Supporting In-Demand Credentials for Teachers program” will help close equity gaps in student access to certified and effective teachers.

Investments in Postsecondary Education Student Supports

About 20% of undergraduate students reported having a disability and students with disabilities [enroll in 2 year institutions at higher rates than 4-year institutions](#). These students face many barriers to success from lack of appropriate accommodations to stigmatizing faculty. Unfortunately, there is no consistent way to track retention and graduation rates of students with disabilities in the U.S. and much of the research uses incomplete disability categories. Data from the [2011 National Longitudinal Transition Study-2](#) showed that the postsecondary completion rate of young adults with disabilities was lower than that of their peers in the general population: completion rates for young adults with disabilities ranged from 29 percent at 4-year universities, to 30 percent at 2-year or community college, to 55 percent at postsecondary vocational, business, or technical school, compared to 51 percent of similar-age peers in the general population had graduated or completed postsecondary programs.

NCLD is pleased that this Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration has sought to improve access to postsecondary education, including at community colleges, by expanding opportunities for students to gain the education and skills necessary to succeed. While expanding access is critical, so is supporting students while in school through completion. For this reason, we urge Congress to [create a \\$62 billion investment for completion grants](#) for student supports. Congress can ensure that colleges have the resources to provide evidence-based academic support services, such as faculty and peer counseling, direct support services, career coaching and networking opportunities, and career pathways through programs that target to serve and assist individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, including students with disabilities, as well as first-generation college students and students impacted by poverty.

The pandemic has exacerbated the educational inequities that students with disabilities, students of color, students experiencing poverty, and other historically underserved students have long faced. We urge you to make these investments to begin to address these inequities in access to high quality and diverse educators and to additional supports to promote success in postsecondary education. Congress must seize this moment by including these investments in the education of all students in a budget reconciliation bill.

If we can provide additional information, please contact me at lkubatzky@nclد.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay Kubatzky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsay Kubatzky
Policy Manager
National Center for Learning Disabilities