February 18, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As you craft your budget for fiscal year 2015, we write to recommend a significant increase in federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The IDEA provides individual-specific programs 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.

We owe it to all students to provide a quality education that will help them graduate and enter successful careers. Under Part B of IDEA—the main component of the law for school children ages 3-21—the federal government committed to contributing 40 percent of the average per pupil expenditure (APPE) for each special education student. However, we have always fallen short of this commitment, with funding for IDEA Part B never reaching above 18.5 percent. This shortfall exacerbates the long-running challenges facing states and local school districts, which are faced with decreasing federal resources, rising special education costs, and growing student populations. Ultimately, this situation shortchanges all students because this federal funding shortfall strains state general funds.

The federal government needs a plan to move us toward full funding for IDEA. This should begin with incremental increases, beginning in fiscal year 2015, in spending. Full federal funding for IDEA will help deliver an appropriate education for children with disabilities and provide necessary support to our teachers and school administrators who are working tirelessly, with limited resources, to better the lives of all students.

In addition to the request of increased FY15 funds for the IDEA program, we propose a renewed partnership with the Administration to consider reauthorization of the Act and identify a plan to reach full funding for IDEA over the next ten years.
Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with any questions. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how best to increase federal funding for IDEA for the coming fiscal year and in the future.

Sincerely,

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress

Bobby Rush
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Allyson Y. Schwartz
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

David McKinley
Member of Congress

Gregg Harper
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Michael Grimm
Member of Congress

Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Mike Honda
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

David Price  
Member of Congress

Kyrsten Sinema  
Member of Congress

Gary Peters  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

Tim Walz  
Member of Congress

John Delaney  
Member of Congress

Ron Barber  
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

James P. Moran  
Member of Congress
John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

Richard Hanna
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

Shula Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Gloria Negrete McLeod
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Nick J. Rahall, II
Member of Congress

Donna M. Christensen
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

John F. Tierney
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress
Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Patrick Murphy  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress

Patrick Meehan  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Yvette Clarke  
Member of Congress

Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Eliot Engel  
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Mike Michaud  
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress
Susan Davis
Member of Congress

Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Collin Peterson
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Beto O’Rourke
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Tim Bishop
Member of Congress

Bruce Braley
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

William Keating
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

Jim Matheson
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Alan Grayson
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Tim Murphy
Member of Congress

James Himes
Member of Congress