



National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc.
The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed



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September 17, 2014

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Alexander:

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE) commend you for your leadership in developing the ***Strengthening Education Through Research Act (SETRA)***, legislation that values the critical role of research in developing effective practices to support positive outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. Our organizations are pleased to support numerous provisions in this legislation, however, we have significant concerns regarding the authorization levels for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER).

In particular, our organizations support improvements outlined in SETRA that would benefit children and youth with disabilities, their families and the educators who work on their behalf, including:

- Prioritizing special education research funding within the Institute of Education Sciences.
- Ensuring peer reviewers have expertise in special education.
- Emphasizing the elimination of the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities.
- Increasing dissemination and collaboration with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).
- Focus on adult education literacy as a research area.

We believe these provisions – and others throughout SETRA – will improve opportunities to research key areas impacting the education of children and youth with disabilities, and we appreciate your strong voice for special education research during this process.

Although the *Strengthening Education Through Research Act* proposes to prioritize funding for special education research, a gesture that our organizations sincerely appreciate, it is important to recognize that the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) suffered a 30 percent cut to its budget in 2011. Unfortunately, SETRA's authorization levels remain inadequate to sufficiently address the nation's special education research needs.

Families and educators alike rely on a healthy federal investment in research and development to discover innovative strategies that address the educational, behavioral and developmental needs of the nation's six million children and youth with disabilities. Since its inception in 2006, NCSER has produced rigorous, relevant research that has identified effective interventions, informed more accurate methods for identifying disabilities in young children, and developed technological innovations to support academic instruction for students with disabilities and their families, among other innovations.

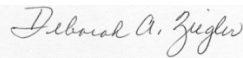
In recent years, NCSER's budget cuts have been far greater than its sister centers within the Institute for Education Sciences. In fact, just last year, NCSER could not fund 60 percent of its highly-ranked grant applications due to insufficient funding.

Again, NCLD, CEC and HECSE appreciate the challenging political and fiscal climate that permeates Congress. It is our hope that the improvements included in SETRA will foster opportunities to address some of our most pressing educational needs. However, such ambitions must be met with adequate investments. We look forward to continuing to work with you as SETRA moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,



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*The **National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)** improves the lives of all people with learning difficulties and disabilities by empowering parents, enabling young adults, transforming schools, and creating policy and advocacy impact. NCLD envisions a society in which every individual possesses the academic, social and emotional skills needed to succeed in school, at work and in life.*

www.nclد.org

*The **Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)** is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC's mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.*

www.cec.sped.org

*The **Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE)** is a national organization that represents major university programs that prepare personnel for special education leadership roles. HECSE member institutions are committed to effective professional preparation for new teachers, teacher educators, school administrators, field researchers, disability and education advocates, policy makers, and related services professionals.*

<http://hecse.net/>



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