



**TEACHER  
EDUCATION DIVISION**  
OF THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN



Higher Education Consortium  
for Special Education

June 01, 2022

Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair, Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education Appropriations Subcommittee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member, Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education Appropriations  
Subcommittee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair, Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education Appropriations Subcommittee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education Appropriations  
Subcommittee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole, Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you consider your FY 2023 spending bill for Labor/HHS/Education, we urge you to include the following funding levels for the following programs:

- **\$300 million for IDEA Personnel Preparation Program**
- **\$300 million for the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence**
- **\$150 million for Teacher Quality Partnership Grants under the Higher Education Act**
- **\$80 million for the National Center for Special Education Research in IES**

Access to a workforce of fully prepared special educators -- including mental health experts such as school psychologists, counselors and social workers -- is critical to recovery from the pandemic. Students with disabilities have been significantly affected by the pandemic -- with access to needed services via remote instruction often proving to be challenging. Meeting their academic and social/emotional needs to enable recovery and resilience requires a fully prepared specialized workforce, which we simply do not have at this time. Despite the significant investment in education by the American Rescue Plan Act, none of those funds were dedicated to ensuring and maintaining a pipeline of well-prepared diverse educators. Without the qualified

workforce required, our education recovery is in jeopardy and students with disabilities will not receive the critical services they need. The FY 2023 funding bill is the opportunity to address the pipeline needs.

Before the pandemic began our nation was in the throes of a dire shortage of special education teachers as reported by 48 states. Likewise, our higher education special education programs which prepare the nation's special education workforce were shrinking, with programs closing and a shortage of higher education special education faculty. These critical federal investments make irreplaceable difference in sustaining our infrastructure for the special education personnel needed to carry out IDEA. We urge you to fund these critical programs at the levels recommended.

- **IDEA Personnel Preparation Program** is designed to increase the pipeline of well-prepared special education teachers, early interventionists, administrators, and specialized instructional support personnel. In 2016, 1,593 scholars completed programs. In programs where scholar stipends are authorized, 73% of the grant funds directly supported students. This program is an essential component of IDEA, investing in a foundation of deployed special educators to carry out the mandate of Part B.

But the twin shortages of special education teachers and higher education special education faculty loom large, threatening our nation's capacity to deliver mandated services. Nearly every state reports a shortage of special education teachers. Further compounding this national shortage is the estimate that millions of educators are expected to retire over the next decade, many of whom are special educators. The same is true for special education faculty. The combination of retirements and lowered enrollment in special education teacher preparation programs will act to further extend the shortage of well-prepared teachers. We note that between 2012 and 2017 there was a 17% reduction in the production of new special education doctoral degrees, thus curtailing the pool of qualified new special education teacher educators.

- **The Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence**, The Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program is specifically designed to support comprehensive teacher preparation at programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and minority-serving institutions (MSIs) of higher education including Alaska Native-serving or Native Hawaiian-serving institutions (ANNH), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions (AANAPISI), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Native American-serving nontribal institution (NASNTI), and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs). Teacher preparation programs at these institutions are a long-standing source of well-prepared and diverse teachers. For example, despite making up just 3% of institutions of higher education, HBCUs prepare 50% of the nation's Black teachers. Further, nearly half of all Latino/a teachers with a bachelor's degree earned their degree at an MSI.. More than a decade after its enactment, Congress finally provided funding (\$8 million) for the grant program in FY 2022, but a much larger investment is needed.

- **Teacher Quality Partnership Grants, Title II of the Higher Education Act** provide support for critical innovations in teacher preparation, requiring partnerships between high need PK-12 schools and educator preparation programs to prepare promising students to be teachers in shortage areas – math, science and special education – in high need schools. All teachers prepared by these partnerships, no matter what their field, must be skilled in teaching both students with disabilities and English Language Learners. The partnerships support one-year residency programs and require participants to teach for at least three years in a high need school upon completion of their preparation – an important return on investment for the federal government and our nation’s students.
- **National Center for Special Education Research of the Institute of Education Sciences (NCSER)** provides investments in hundreds of research projects in areas that improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities. This research – which has focused on projects such as student assessment, autism, literacy, early learning, and family involvement – has produced effective interventions, teaching practices, and strategies for learning that have proven to be an invaluable resource to families, educators and communities.

Together, the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE) and the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) represent special education experts in higher education who are preparing tomorrow’s special educators, general educators, researchers and those who will prepare subsequent generations of educators. HECSE is comprised of 75 U.S. universities with doctoral programs in special education. Our member institutions are at the forefront of teacher education, research, and development in special education. TED is one of 17 divisions comprised of CEC members who are dedicated to the preparation and development of future special educators. Over 1500 strong, TED members lead and support teacher education on behalf of students with exceptional needs and their families. Together HECSE and TED represent the voice of those preparing the next generation of special educators – teachers, leaders, researchers and higher education faculty.

We look forward to continuing to work with you for FY 2023 to address the dire need for well-prepared effective special education teachers and investments in research to continually improve practice. For additional information, please contact Kaitlyn Brennan , our policy advisor, at [kaitlynbrennan88@gmail.com](mailto:kaitlynbrennan88@gmail.com)

***Cynthia Vail***

Cynthia Vail  
University of Georgia  
HECSE President

[cvail@uga.edu](mailto:cvail@uga.edu)

***Frank Dykes***

Frank Dykes  
University of Texas at Tyler  
TED President

[fdykes@uttyler.edu](mailto:fdykes@uttyler.edu)

cc: Members of Senate and House Subcommittees on Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations