



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Appropriations
United States Senate
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education
Appropriations
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Senator Murray:

As the Subcommittee prepares to mark up the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, I write on behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) urging you to increase funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B State Grants to \$13.97 billion, which includes an increase to \$441.8 million for IDEA's Part B Section 619 and an increase to \$531 million for IDEA Part C Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities. Congress must work to fulfill its promise to fund 40% of the average per-pupil expenditure in public elementary and secondary schools. Appropriating more funds for FY 2020 would be a step in that direction. In addition to funding IDEA, ASHA also urges you to include the following report language to reduce the administrative burden of duplicative paperwork for school-based providers who utilize IDEA funds and bill Medicaid:

The Committee recognizes that unnecessary and redundant paperwork often constrains and compromises the quality of special education services and that steps should be taken to reduce administrative barriers for providing health services in and in coordination with schools. The Committee strongly recommends that the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services within the Department of Education coordinate with the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services within the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to develop trainings and provide technical assistance to assist with billing and payment administration for Medicaid services in schools and reduce the total paperwork burden for school-based clinicians who utilize IDEA funds and bill Medicaid.

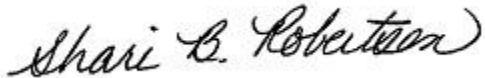
ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

IDEA serves more than 6.5 million children in our nation's schools and preserves a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities, including students with communication disorders. Infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-2) and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C, and children and youth (3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. IDEA provides important civil rights protections for children that must not only be maintained but also strengthened. Congress must do more to meet the needs of the country's education system to ensure children with disabilities receive the free and appropriate public education they are entitled to under law. Increasing funding for the program is a significant step in fulfilling the promise that Congress made.

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Thank you for your efforts on this important area of education. ASHA looks forward to working with you on this issue and others that are vital to the education and health of our nation's children. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Erik Lazdins, ASHA's associate director of federal affairs, at elazdins@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shari B. Robertson".

Shari B. Robertson, PhD, CCC-SLP
2019 ASHA President

cc: The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations