

Chair Cassidy
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Sanders
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chair Collins
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Murray
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chair Walberg
Committee on Education & Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Scott
Committee on Education & Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chair Cole
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member DeLauro
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 18, 2025

Dear Chair Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, Chair Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, Chair Collins, Ranking Member Murray, Chair Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the seminal education law affording preschoolers, children, and youth with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education and ensuring infants and toddlers with developmental needs are identified and supported with services in partnership with their families. The educational opportunities afforded under IDEA benefit millions of children with disabilities and their families each year, including over 460,000 preschool-aged children and over 530,000 infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities.^{1,2} Yet the Executive Order and legislative proposals seeking to dismantle the Department of Education, which has been home to IDEA programs since the Department's inception, threaten the very existence of this highly successful law and its documented benefits for children who otherwise might not reach their full potential. **We, the undersigned 34 national organizations and 85 state-level organizations, write to express our deep concern for the long-term impact that the efforts to dismantle the Department of Education will have on children with disabilities, in particular those ages birth through five, and urge Congress to reject legislative proposals that move IDEA out of the Department of Education, reduce funding, or otherwise alter program structure in ways that undermine the services and protections under IDEA.**

¹ Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (2024 Sept. 9). Part C National Program Data.
<https://ectacenter.org/partc/partcdata.asp#appropriations>

² Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (2024 Sept. 9). Section 619 National Program Data.
<https://ectacenter.org/sec619/sec619data.asp>

First passed in 1975 to address the educational rights of school-aged children with disabilities, IDEA later expanded to include education and early intervention services for children from birth through age five. IDEA Part B, Section 619 (Sec. 619) built upon the established state grants for school-aged children to authorize supplemental funding for preschool children with disabilities ages three through five. IDEA Part C (Part C) provides for state grants to implement identification and early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and delays ages birth through two years.³ With the additions of Sec. 619 and Part C, children with disabilities or developmental delays and their families have continuous access to developmental and education support services from birth through age 21. Most importantly, these programmatic additions for young children created the prevention structure provided by early identification and services for developmental delays and disabilities that can prevent or reduce the need for more costly special education or other services funded by federal, state, and local communities later on.

Access to high quality early intervention and education services can change a child's developmental trajectory, improving long-term outcomes and fostering success, benefiting the child, their family, and their community.⁴ A child's brain develops at the most rapid pace across its lifetime in the first three years of life. The brain reaches 90% of its adult size by age 5, and the brain's ability to form new neural connections lessens as the child ages. Research shows that early intervention services through Part C can improve children's cognitive development, language/communication skills, behavior, and motor skills. Additional evidence shows that pre-kindergarten education for children with disabilities can improve social, language and academic skills critical to kindergarten readiness.⁵ Time and again, the evidence demonstrates that the earlier the intervention, the greater the long-term return on investment.⁶ For example, a recent analysis of six states found that between 760 and 3,000 children receiving early intervention services through Part C per state were able to discontinue special education services at age 3, saving between \$7.6 million to \$68.2 million in one year depending on the state; three-year cost estimates that accounted for a child re-enrolling in services still projected substantial cost savings.⁷ This substantial return on investment – both in terms of future cost savings and developmental outcomes – cement Sec. 619 and Part C as critical components of IDEA and our nation's education system.

The [Executive Order](#) signed last month to close the Department of Education (ED) would undermine the success of IDEA programs and services. IDEA, enacted before the establishment of the ED, was statutorily moved to the ED because it concerns improving education, with education-related goals and outcomes, and is primarily implemented in the context of public schools. If followed, the Executive Order and subsequent legislative proposal to move IDEA from ED to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would divorce the law from those aims. Furthermore, the

³ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C: Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities. (2025, April 3). <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R43631>

⁴ Guralnick MJ. A developmental systems model for early intervention. *Infants and Young Children*. 2001;14(2):1–18.

⁵ Lawrence, S., Smith, S. & Banerjee, R. (2016). *Preschool Inclusion: Key Findings from Research and Implications for Policy*. National Center for Children in Poverty.

⁶ Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. 5 Reasons Why Early Intervention is Valuable. <https://www.ideainfanttoddler.org/pdf/Value-of-Part-C-Infographic-PDF.pdf>

⁷ Emerald Consulting. (n.d.). Cost avoidance return on investment. Document provided to the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center by Maureen Greer, Executive Director at the IDEA Infant & Toddler Coordinators Association, via email on April 1, 2020.

potential loss of institutional knowledge from ED staff would not only challenge technical assistance to State and Local Education Agencies, but would also hinder both federal and state oversight and weaken civil protections for children with disabilities.

Our organizations are further alarmed by the various proposed changes to program structure and funding cuts that would disrupt access to services for infants, toddlers and preschoolers served by Sec. 619 and Part C at a time of life when every day forms another layer in the foundation of their brains' development. Legislation to block grant IDEA would endanger the protections and assurances for young children whose development is not on track, as well as hinder the efforts to identify young children with developmental delays or disabilities in child care, school, and at home. Currently, families are assured access to in-depth assessments and plans for services developed with their coordination. Preschool-aged children are guaranteed services, while babies are connected to appropriate services. The relatively little federal funding within IDEA allotted to Sec. 619 and appropriated for Part C would likely be at risk, especially without clear avenues for states to support early development. IDEA Part D funding for personnel development would also likely be vulnerable, worsening the nationwide shortage of early interventionists and early childhood special educators, weakening technical assistance to states, and undermining the parent training centers that are required by statute. Additionally, any federal cuts to Medicaid – the third largest funding source of early intervention services – would further strain cash-strapped State and local budgets needing to make up for the loss of federal funds.⁸

In addition to the direct actions and repercussions outlined above, it is important to also note that the erasure of core ED programs beyond IDEA would negatively impact children with disabilities of all ages. Disruption to or loss of research funds would stall advancements in evidence-based teaching strategies; cancelled grants to universities to subsidize the cost of education for teachers and early interventionists would further deplete a strained workforce; and cuts to public student loan forgiveness would further hamper the workforce by further disincentivizing post-secondary students to enter one of the lowest-paid occupations.^{9,10} Without a sufficient workforce, children with disabilities may not get the services they need, with life-long ramifications for their development, their families, and their communities.

Dismantling ED and untethering IDEA from other education programs has the potential to wind back the clock on the past fifty years of progress for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. We implore the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, the House Education and Workforce Committee, and both the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations to directly engage with the Administration and to exercise their powers of oversight and of the purse to firmly reject these efforts—affirming our nation's commitment to educate and see the potential in our children of *all* abilities through IDEA.

⁸ Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy Center for Children and Families (2025). Medicaid Provides Early Intervention for Toddlers with Disabilities and Developmental Delays. <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2025/03/07/medicaid-provides-early-intervention-for-infants-and-toddlers-with-disabilities-and-developmental-delays/>

⁹ IES National Center for Education Statistics (2023 Oct. 17). Most Public Schools Face Challenges in Hiring and Other Personnel Entering the 2023-4 Academic Year. https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/10_17_2023.asp

¹⁰ McLean, C., Whitebook, M., & Roh, E. (2019). From Unlivable Wages to Just Pay for Early Educators. *UC Berkeley: Center for the Study of Childcare Employment*. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2qb2h765>

Sincerely,

Access Ready Inc

AFSCME

Allies for Independence

All Our Kin

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Psychological Association

Assistive Technology Industry Association

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Learner Equity

Council for Learning Disabilities

Council of Administrators of Special Education

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

EDGE Consulting Partners

Educare Learning Network

Education Reform Now

First Focus Campaign for Children

MomsRising

National Association for Family Child Care

National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of State Leaders in Early Education

National Center for Learning Disabilities

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Women's Law Center Action Fund

New America's Early and Elementary Education Policy Team

NREA

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Start Early

The Arc of the United States

Trust for Learning

Youth Villages

ZERO TO THREE

Alabama

VOICES for Alabama's Children

Arizona

Arizona Rural Schools Association

Children's Action Alliance

California

Association of California School Administrators
California School Boards Association
Children Now
The Center for District Innovation and Leadership in Early Education

Colorado

Clayton Early Learning
Colorado Children's Campaign

Connecticut

Connecticut Voices for Children

Florida

Chamber of Mothers Miami

Georgia

Easter Seals North Georgia, Inc.
GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Montessori Partnerships for Georgia
Parent to Parent of Georgia

Hawai'i

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Illinois

Advance Illinois
CARE Consulting
Chamber of Mothers Chicago
Civic Leaders for Illinois Children
Early Intervention Services, Inc.
Family Focus
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Developmental Therapy Association
Illinois Head Start Association
Legal Council for Health Justice
Marillac St. Vincent Family Services
One Hope United
POWER-PAC IL
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois
Raising Illinois PN3 Coalition
We, the Village Coalition

Indiana

Indiana Small and Rural Schools

Kentucky

874K Disabilities Coalition
ARCH Community Health Coalition, Inc.
Autism Society of the Bluegrass
Kentucky Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities
Kentucky Psychological Association
Kentucky Voices for Health

Louisiana

ResourceFull Consulting, LLC

Maine

Maine Association for the Education of Young Children
Maine People's Alliance

Massachusetts

Chamber of Mothers Boston Chapter
The Boston Foundation

Michigan

Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC)
Early On Coalition
Early On Michigan Foundation
Michigan's Children
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Michigan League for Public Policy
Southeast Michigan Chapter, Chamber of Mothers
Think Babies Michigan

Minnesota

Chamber of Mothers - Minnesota Chapter

Montana

Zero to Five Montana

Nebraska

Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

New Jersey

Advocates for Children of New Jersey

New York

Rural Schools Association of New York

The Children's Agenda

North Carolina

Family Centered Treatment Foundation

North Dakota

North Dakota Small Organized Schools

Ohio

Cincinnati Chamber of Mothers

Groundwork Ohio

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Rural Schools Coalition

Organization of Rural Oklahoma Schools

Oregon

Children's Institute

Oregon Small Schools Association

Prevent Child Abuse Oregon

Pennsylvania

First Up

Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC)

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

The Rehabilitation and Community Service Providers Association (RCPA)

Trying Together

Rhode Island

Community Provider Network of Rhode Island

National Education Association Rhode Island

Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Right from the Start Campaign

RI Federation of Teachers and Health Prof.

RIPIN

Seven Hills Rhode Island Early Intervention

South Carolina

South Carolina Program for Infant/Toddler Care

Texas

Texans Care for Children

Vermont

Let's Grow Kids

Vermont Rural Education Association

Voices for Vermont's Children

Washington

Rural Education Center

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance