

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chair
Committee on Education and Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Cassidy and Walberg, and Ranking Members Sanders and Scott:

The undersigned organizations, members of the IDEA Implementation Coalition, urge you to oppose any efforts to move administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) out of the U.S. Department of Education. Originally housed in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the law's administration was moved to the Department of Education when the agency was established in 1979—immediate acknowledgement that the IDEA is an *education* law. The statute itself (Sec. 1402) states the Office of Special Education Programs, overseeing special education across the country, will be housed in the U.S. Department of Education.

Health and other needs of children and youth with disabilities are served under other laws and housed in other appropriate agencies. The IDEA must be maintained in the Department of Education, the agency that oversees and ensures quality education for all students, to preserve the statute's core function of providing students with disabilities the same educational advantages and opportunities for success enjoyed by nondisabled students. The expertise to accomplish this goal lies in the Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the IDEA has given millions of children and youth with disabilities access to a free appropriate public education denied them before the law's enactment. The Department of Education has developed and continues to amass the deep knowledge and expertise necessary to support state and local education agencies in providing quality special education instruction and specialized instructional support services. As required under the IDEA, the Department enforces the law consistently across states through regular monitoring activities and provides technical assistance to states to maintain compliance with the law. The Department also collects data to shine a light on critical issues in delivering special education and funds research to ensure states are using the best educational practices to ensure educational success for students with disabilities.

It is also critically important to note that students with disabilities are general education students first. They participate in and benefit from all other education programs directed out of the U.S. Department of Education, e.g., career and technical education, Title I compensatory services, and English language acquisition, just to name a few. The staff of OSEP interacts and coordinates on a regular basis with the other Department offices that administer other federal

education programs, ensuring the educational needs of students with disabilities are considered across all activities of the agency.

Education programs belong together in the agency that has the expertise, knowledge, and commitment to ensure all students, including students with disabilities, receive a world-class education—the U.S. Department of Education. We urge you to oppose any efforts to move the IDEA out of the Department of Education.

For additional information, please feel free to contact Phyllis Wolfram, Executive Director, Council of Administrators of Special Education, pwolfram@casecec.org, or Myrna Mandlawitz, CASE Policy/Legislative Consultant, mrmassociates@verizon.net.

Thank you for supporting the educational success of all students, including students with disabilities.

Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy

American Federation of Teachers

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Physical Therapy Association

American Speech-Hearing-Language Association

Council of Administrators of Special Education

Council of the Great City Schools

Council for Exceptional Children

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of Federally Impacted Schools

National Association of School Nurses

National Education Association

National School Boards Association

School Social Work Association of America

cc: Members, House Education & Workforce and Senate HELP Committees