

September 17, 2009

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen, Jr.
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Platts
2455 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Walz
1722 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Van Hollen, Platts and Walz:

On behalf of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), which represents the state directors of special education in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Bureau of Indian Education, the Department of Defense Education Agency, the Federal territories and the Freely Associated States, I am writing to thank you for introducing H.R. 3578, The Everyone Deserves Unconditional Access to Education (EDUCATE) Act, which would put the federal government on track to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in six years.

NASDSE believes that the introduction of this bill is critical for two reasons. First, when IDEA was passed in 1975, Congress, in recognition of the high cost in providing students with disabilities a free appropriate public education, pledged to pay for 40% of the national average per-pupil expenditure for students in special education. However, in the 34 years since IDEA was first enacted, the federal government has never fulfilled this promise, leaving much of the financial burden to states and local school districts to fund high cost educational services. Second, in light of the severe economic crisis states are experiencing, coupled with the steep shortfalls that states may experience once the one time funding provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) expires, NASDSE very much appreciates the importance and timeliness of the EDUCATE Act.

We look forward to continuing to work with both you and your staff on this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact NASDSE's Director of Government Relations, Nancy Reder at nancy.reder@nasdse.org or 703-519-3800,ext.334.

Sincerely,

Bill East, Ed.D
Executive Director