

December 4, 2020

Dear President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris:

Our organizations congratulate you on your election and look forward to working with you as you lead our nation to “build back better.” Thank you for recognizing that our nation’s public education system is in dire need of professionals to fill critically depleted jobs – particularly in special education and related fields.

Our organizations work together to ensure that all students, particularly students with disabilities and those experiencing COVID-related educational and mental health challenges, have professionals available to deliver needed services. In addition to significant investments in K-12 and higher education across the board, and in the IDEA formula grants, **we request an increased investment of \$300 million into a critical workforce preparation program, Personnel Preparation under Part D of IDEA, in the next COVID-19 relief package.**

The Personnel Preparation program under Part D of IDEA is the federal investment which ensures a pipeline of professionals for special education and [specialized instructional support personnel](#). It includes a critical investment in the infrastructure of higher education which ensures the preparation of doctoral level personnel who in turn will lead and prepare the next generation of professionals

This well-established program prepares special educators and critical specialized instructional support personnel much needed during the time of COVID. Before the pandemic began there was a dire shortage of special educators in 48 states. The pandemic has exacerbated that shortage. In the last year, state and local education jobs have declined by 8.8%. Half of the job losses reported between March and April of 2020 were among special education teachers, tutors and teaching assistants.

Likewise, specialized instructional support personnel, including school psychologists, social workers and school counselors, are at critical shortage levels. With the social, emotional and mental health challenges that are emerging and will continue to emerge among students and their families, these professionals are needed more than ever. The expertise required to address the results of stress and trauma on children can only be provided by well-prepared professionals with expert knowledge and research-based skills. The learning loss experienced by students with the greatest need will likewise require additional well-trained special education professionals.

In the Senate, [S. 4100](#) has been introduced and includes this \$300 million investment. We support this legislation and urge you to work for its adoption.

Our educators, schools and families face enormous challenges in recovering and “building back better” from the pandemic. We are eager to work with you and your team to ensure that our students, families, educators and all school personnel are ready to move forward.

The Advocacy Institute

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

American Council of the Blind

American Federation of Teachers

American Music Therapy Association

American Psychological Association

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

The Arc of the United States

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Brain Injury Association of America

CAST

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf

Council for Exceptional Children

Council for Learning Disabilities

Council of Administrators of Special Education

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Easter Seals

Edge Consulting Partners

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Learning Disabilities Association of America

National Associations of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Education Association

PDK International/Educators Rising

Public Advocacy for KIDS

The Rural School and Community Trust

Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

Visionserve Alliance