

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

We write to bring attention to the unique challenges facing students and educators across New York State as a result of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Specifically, we request additional support for teachers and school administrators as they work to maintain educational opportunities for our most vulnerable students through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

As you know, IDEA Part B provides federal funding for the provision of primary and secondary educational services to children with disabilities. Under this program, educators develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the unique circumstances of each participating child, ensuring that necessary special education services are available to suit their needs. Funding provided under IDEA Part B is critical to maintaining these programs and ensuring every child in New York can reach their full potential.

Unfortunately, educators and students participating in special education now face unprecedented obstacles as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools across New York strain their resources to utilize distance learning technologies and maintain their curriculum, special education programs face acute challenges in providing services to children with disabilities, many of whom depend on specialized programming and in-person instruction. Our school districts also face extraordinary budgetary constraints as they work to maintain these essential services amidst uncertain economic conditions that directly impact the availability of education funding.

IDEA represents a commitment by federal lawmakers to ensure the best possible opportunities for children with disabilities. Federal support for IDEA Part B has fallen short of full funding since the program's establishment in 1975, and it is critical that we take necessary steps to address this shortfall in response to the sustained challenges facing special education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we are grateful that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided approximately \$13.5 billion in relief for school districts impacted by COVID-19, additional resources and accommodations will be necessary to assist schools in meeting their obligations under IDEA.

Congress must remain responsive to the full scope of budgetary challenges that will face school districts in the coming months. New York is the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, and the significant financial challenges facing our schools have the potential to impact all of our students, including those who depend on IDEA programming. Strong federal support will remain essential to ensuring our students and educators can reach their full potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



John Katko
Member of Congress



Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Peter T. King
Member of Congress



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



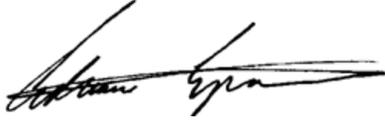
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



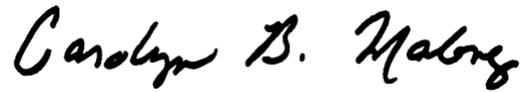
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
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Gregory W. Meeks
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Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Max Rose
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress