CCSSO

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Dear Senator Frist and Senator Daschle:

For the last several years, Congress has worked to prioritize special education funding, increasing appropriations by more than $6.5 billion since 1996. We applaud your work, and we appreciate your commitment to reaching the goal of full funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The undersigned chief state school officers urge you to support an amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill that would increase IDEA funding by $2.2 billion in FY2004.

Earlier this year, Congress adopted a budget agreement that outlines a $2.2 billion increase for special education. However, the FY2004 Labor-HHS-Education bill adopted by the Committee on Appropriations provides only a $984 million increase for IDEA and falls far short of the funding level set by the budget. We encourage you to support an amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education bill that would restore IDEA appropriations to the level outlined in the budget.

As Congress works to find additional funding for IDEA, we are also concerned that increases to the program will come at the expense of other vital education, health, and labor programs. We urge you to fund the additional IDEA increase without making across the board cuts to other programs in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. An across the board cut would be devastating to other priority programs in No Child Left Behind. We have worked too hard on the implementation of No Child Left Behind to have services cut back at this early stage of the reform process. In the case of the Title I program, an across the board cut would decrease funding for disadvantaged students by more than $100 million next year. Each of our states needs additional special education funds, but we cannot be asked to choose between our students with disabilities and our disadvantaged students served by Title I and other NCLB programs. Please oppose all amendments that are paid for with across the board cuts.

We look forward to working with you to reach the goal of full funding for IDEA.

Sincerely,

Dr. Edward R. Richardson
Alabama Superintendent of Education

Ms. Kathy Cox
Georgia Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Tom Horne
Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ms. Patricia Hamamoto
Hawaii Superintendent of Education

Mr. Jack O'Connell
California Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Marilyn Howard
Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ms. Valerie Woodruff
Delaware Secretary of Education

Dr. Robert Schiller
Illinois Superintendent of Education

Dr. Suellen K. Reed
Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mr. Ted Stilwill
Iowa Director of Education

Dr. John A. Tompkins
Kansas Commissioner of Education

Mr. Gene Wilhoit
Kentucky Commissioner of Education

Mr. Cecil J. Picard
Louisiana Superintendent of Education

Ms. Susan A. Gendron
Maine Commissioner of Education

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
Maryland Superintendent of Schools

Dr. David P. Driscoll
Massachusetts Commissioner of Education

Mr. Thomas D. Watkins, Jr.
Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mr. Henry L. Johnson
Mississippi Superintendent of Education

Dr. D. Kent King
Missouri Commissioner of Education

Ms. Linda McCulloch
Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Douglas D. Christensen
Nebraska Commissioner of Education

Dr. Jack McLaughlin
Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mr. Nicholas C. Donohue
New Hampshire Commissioner of Education

Dr. William L. Librera
New Jersey Commissioner of Education

Mr. Michael J. Davis
New Mexico Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mr. Richard P. Mills
New York Commissioner of Education

Dr. Michael E. Ward
North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead
North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Susan T. Zelman
Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ms. Sandy Garrett
Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ms. Susan Castillo
Oregon Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Vicki L. Phillips
Pennsylvania Secretary of Education

Mr. Peter McWalters
Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Ms. Inez M. Tenenbaum
South Carolina State Superintendent of Education

Karon Schaack
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Dr. Lana C. Seivers
Tennessee Commissioner of Education

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Vermont Commissioner of Education

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Dr. Teresa Bergeson
Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. David Stewart
West Virginia Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Elizabeth Burmaster
Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction