



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

May 14, 1999

Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Governor of Iowa  
State Capitol  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Vilsack:

I am writing in response to your letter expressing concern about the potential financial impact on Iowa school districts and taxpayers after the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in Cedar Rapids Community School District v. Garrett F.

While I understand the concerns of States and school districts that have requested full funding for IDEA, it would cost another \$11 billion to fund the program at the level authorized by law. Our budget request for fiscal year 2000 includes an increase of \$116 million for Special Education targeted for those programs that we believe have the greatest promise for improving educational results for children with disabilities. Since 1996, funding for States in the areas of special education has increased by almost \$2 billion or by 85 percent. I would support even greater increases for special education services if more funding were available for education. However, I would not support increased funding at the expense of other vital education initiatives.

There are provisions in IDEA designed to help school districts provide special education and related services, including health services. Each State must have interagency agreements that require non-educational agencies, such as the agency that administers Medicaid to provide and pay for the special education and related services that they are otherwise responsible for. These interagency agreements must also include reimbursement procedures so that schools get paid if they provide a service that another agency covers. In addition, States can use a portion of their IDEA grant to help districts pay for high cost children. States and school districts can also use a portion of their IDEA grant to set up and run coordinated services systems designed to improve results for all children, including children with disabilities.

I also encourage you to look at legislative initiatives in States that are using a variety of appropriately trained health care providers to enable greater independent living, as well as to contain costs. The cost of hiring health personnel will vary depending on the level of licensure required by State law. For example, at one point in the Cedar Rapids case, Iowa's Nurse Practice Act required that a registered nurse provide the needed services. That has now changed and a licensed practical nurse may provide the care. Other States allow appropriately trained, but less expensive health care providers to provide ventilator and respiratory assistance.

Department staff will work with Iowa officials to provide any technical assistance that would be helpful to you. In addition, technical assistance is available to your State Educational Agency through the Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center (GLARRC) at the following address:

GLARRC  
Larry Magliocca, Director  
Center for Special Needs Populations  
The Ohio State University  
700 Ackertnan Road, Suite 440  
Columbus, Ohio 43202  
Telephone: (614) 447.0844 TTY: (614) 447-8776  
fax: (614) 447-9043

Children are this country's most valuable asset and educating all children appropriately is vital to this country's long-term future. The statistics are clear - children who do not receive an appropriate education are much less likely to live independently and contribute productively to society. I applaud your support for equal educational opportunities for all children.

Yours sincerely,

Richard W. Riley