



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

June 14, 2001

Honorable Richard G. Lugar
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lugar:

Thank you for your letter in support of providing additional funding for the Special Education Grants to States program.

The Special Education Grants to States program is the primary source for Federal support to States, local educational agencies, and schools to address the needs of children with disabilities. Since 1996, funding for that program has grown by over 170 percent, and the Federal contribution has risen from 7 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure (APPE) to 15 percent. Because of changes in the ways that funds are distributed within States, this has led to an increase of almost 220 percent in the minimum amount of Grants to States funds that must be passed through from the State level to local educational agencies.

This Administration believes that it is important for the Federal Government to continue to provide additional support to States and local educational agencies to serve children with disabilities. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2002 would further increase funding for the Grants to States program by \$1 billion, by far the largest increase ever proposed in a President's budget, to a level of \$7.3 billion. This level of funding would provide about 17 percent of APPE for 6.5 million children with disabilities.

We also believe that the President's Reading First initiative, announced as part of the President's No Child Left Behind proposal, will help to reduce the cost of special education if more children receive proper reading instruction earlier. Approximately 80 percent of the 3 million children with learning disabilities served under the IDEA have reading difficulties. Because of inadequate or inappropriate instruction in the early grades, many of these children may have been unnecessarily referred to special education. Others may need fewer special education services if they received early intervention.

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The upcoming reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act will offer an opportunity for us to review the issue of funding levels, along with other aspects of this important legislation. We look forward to working with you on our shared goal of providing a first-class education to all our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia J. Guard".

Patricia J. Guard
Acting Director
Office of Special Education Programs