



Senator Ben Sasse
107 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

June 10, 2020

Dear Senator Sasse,

On behalf of the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), representing 1,700 locally elected community leaders serving Nebraska’s 260 districts and ESU’s, we are reaching out to voice our concerns over the urgent challenges faced by districts to fully implement the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) during this COVID-19 national emergency, and request that new flexibility be given to school districts under IDEA.

Current appropriations average less than \$1,800 per child. This funding for IDEA is completely inadequate. The additional complications facing school districts due to the COVID-19 pandemic have only elucidated this problem.

We applaud the steps taken by bipartisan leadership to provide preliminary resources to states and school districts for IDEA and other education services through the Education Stabilization Fund appropriated through the recent CARES Act. However, this funding insufficiently addresses the ongoing challenges districts and families face in providing high level services to children with disabilities.

By providing the IDEA funding school districts desperately need, you enable special education students to receive appropriate special education and related services. Meeting the mental and physical needs of students with disabilities often requires a more normal school structure in their daily routines.

School districts across Nebraska continue to provide special education and related services in the amount and/or type required by each student’s Individualized Education Plan. However, there are many legal concerns that have not been addressed by the U.S. Department of Education’s guidance for schools during this pandemic.

Schools need temporary targeted waivers to address challenges that are interrupting the delivery of certain special education services (such as public health directives preventing certain physical therapies; shortages of qualified staff caused by health and safety concerns; school building closures due to health and safety concerns where certain equipment and technology is housed and cannot be relocated; and, lack of Internet access and/or necessary hardware to connect service providers and instructional staff to students).

Upon the resumption of normal school operations school districts look forward to uninterrupted delivery of special education and related services in the amount and type required by a student’s Individualized Education Plan. Therefore, temporary targeted waivers to districts would be discontinued pursuant to any federal, state, and local clearances needed for a district to resume its normal schedule and delivery of education services.

We appreciate your leadership and support in making sure these items are addressed. Like you, we are public education in Nebraska, let’s continue to lead the way.

Stacie Higgins
NASB President
Nebraska City BOE

Brad Wilkins
NASB Legislation Committee Chair
Ainsworth BOE

John Spatz
NASB Executive Director
Graduate of Ord Public Schools