

# JEWISH DISABILITY ADVOCACY DAY

ON CAPITOL HILL, WASHINGTON DC SPONSORED BY THE JEWISH DISABILITY NETWORK



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## Congress: Keep your promise on special education funding

### Support the IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 2902)

#### Special education services are chronically underfunded with real-world consequences

**Background:** When the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** was originally passed as *The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA) of 1975*, it mandated that the federal government pay 40% of the cost of educating students with disabilities, while the states would pay 60%. This landmark legislation was the first time in history that Congress proclaimed that every student is entitled to an education regardless of disability. Before the bill's enactment, many students with disabilities were not permitted to enroll in school.

- Astoundingly, the most recent data from 2016, 41 years after passage of EHCA, shows that the federal government was only paying about 15% of the expense (as opposed to the 40% required by law).
- The significant underfunding has been a **critical challenge for school systems** as they seek to hire a sufficient number of special education teachers, instructional aides, as well as physical, occupational speech and behavioral therapists and other specialists.
- **More students are in need of special education services than decades ago when the original law was enacted.** The lack of federal funding is particularly problematic as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2014 found the rate of Autism among children to be 1 in 68, compared to 1 in 150 in 2000.
- **Students receive less support than they need and school districts are obligated to provide services to everyone deemed eligible for special education.** In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court determined in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017) that, under IDEA, all students with disabilities are guaranteed a “free appropriate public education.”

In June 2017, Reps. Jared Huffman (D-CA), John Katko (R-NY), David McKinley (R-WV), Dave Reichert (R-WA), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), and Tim Walz (D-MN) introduced H.R. 2902, a bipartisan bill to level the playing field for children with disabilities and provide them with a high quality education. The bill gradually would raise the federal contribution to special education until it reaches the 40% threshold in Fiscal Year 2027. For people with disabilities to make meaningful contributions to society and to succeed in higher education, the workforce, and the global economy, IDEA must be fully funded.

**Please co-sponsor and urge prompt passage of the IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R. 2902).**

For further information, please contact Aaron Kaufman, Senior Legislative Associate at The Jewish Federations of North America, 202-736-5865 or [Aaron.Kaufman@JewishFederations.org](mailto:Aaron.Kaufman@JewishFederations.org).