
The Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Full Funding Act (H.R. 4519/ S. 2217)

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) has always advocated for robust funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to promote a strong national special education system. Occupational therapy is one of the related services provided to students with disabilities under the IDEA. Students with disabilities may receive occupational therapy services, which focus on helping students access all parts of their school day: academics, play, self-regulation, social participation, self-care skills (feeding and eating, clothing management, etc), and transition/work skills.

In order to pay for these related services, the IDEA pledged to provide funding to state and local governments equal to 40% of the cost of educating a student with disabilities. However, in the past 30 years, Congress has passed just one spending bill funding the IDEA portion of special education above 18% just once. The latest spending bill provided funding equal to just over 10%.

Many of America's public schools have faced significant funding challenges. In the ten years since the "Great Recession," 29 states provide less school funding per student than was provided prior to 2008. Tighter state budgets have made the federal share of IDEA all the more important. Adequate funding is necessary for quality outcomes for all students by assuring reasonable workloads for school occupational therapy practitioners and appropriate payment for practitioners.

A few years ago, AOTA participated in a survey conducted by the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services. In this survey 83% of respondents said budget cuts impacted the delivery of special education services, 82% stated there were "too few personnel to meet the needs of students with disabilities" and 78% said the cuts increased their caseload.

The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act has made profound changes in the way students with disabilities are educated in America and radically changed the life-long ability of these students to engage as full members of our society. In order to continue to meet the promise of IDEA, state and local education agencies need to receive adequate funding from Congress, and need the assurance that Congress will continue its support for IDEA. This allows for more effective and efficient long-term planning for the services for students with disabilities. Please support continued funding for the IDEA at robust levels.

**Support Robust Funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
Please cosponsor the IDEA Full Funding Act (H.R.4519/ S. 2217).**