

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

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Northern Ohio Latino Office

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Honorable Ron Amstutz, Chair
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Amstutz:

On behalf of the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD), I respectfully request your positive consideration of the attached special education funding and policy principles as the Extended Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education reviews the state's school funding system. As you continue this important work, we encourage you to carefully examine the central principles related to education funding that impact the nearly 1 in 7 students with disabilities.

As you know, Ohio does not have a fully operational school funding formula today. The state's de facto special education funding policy is "maintenance of effort" which may meet federal funding and spending requirements, but fails to keep pace with growing, IEP-based costs for students with disabilities. As a matter of fact, current funding levels only support funding at 90% of 2006 personnel related costs, thereby increasing the burden on local school districts and possibly encouraging some districts to narrow IEP prescribed services.

Preliminary FY 2014-2015 funding recommendations from the Ohio Department of Education call for flat funding for special education pending recommendations by the Governor's Office and/or the Ohio House of Representatives. While the Coalition understands the basic rationale for an initial proposal that simply continues the status quo, it underscores the importance of your work and the need for the Ohio House of Representatives to step forward with specific funding recommendations for the new biennium. In a word, your leadership is needed as we move forward.

The Coalition recognizes that with increased funding comes increased responsibility and greater accountability for results. To that end, we support results-focused system redesigns that move beyond minimal adherence to special education rules ("technical compliance"). We say this knowing that rules matter greatly, but that they are not enough to secure high quality outcomes for students with disabilities in a state with demonstrable special education under performance.

OCECD continues to support an updated, fully funded, cost-based, six weight special education funding formula linked to an adequately funded (per pupil) school foundation formula. The Coalition also supports full funding of preschool special education units. *These policy priorities are consistent with the final recommendations of the bipartisan School Funding Advisory Committee as outlined in its December 2010 final report.*

We look forward to working with you, the State Board of Education and the Kasich administration to advance toward an improved system of funding special education and related services. Please do not hesitate to contact me about these or any other issues related to special education funding and policy.

Sincerely,



Margaret Burley, Executive Director
OCECD

cc: Representatives Bill Hayes, Matt Lundy, Ronald Maag, Jeff McClain, Debbie Phillips, Gerald Stebelton, Vernon Sykes