



## INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

### ***COSSBA Requests***

- Amend IDEA to ensure parents and school districts can fully collaborate and provide an education that meets the needs of individual students.
- Allocate more funding for students with disabilities that is at least equal to the national average per pupil expenditure for students served under the IDEA.

### ***Issue History***

Signed November 29, 1975, by President Gerald Ford, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) turns 50 in 2025. The Act governs special education services for students across the country by ensuring all students with a disability have access to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Even though IDEA has resulted in positive changes for students with disabilities, issues still exist. Parents and school districts must navigate a process that is burdensome, and often results in a lack of collaboration and trust. Laws and regulations that deal with student discipline, due process, and placement tend to result in adversarial relationships between parents and school staff. Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings focus more on addressing procedural requirements rather than student needs. The law should promote collaboration between parents and schools, building trust, and removing procedural hurdles creating an environment that promotes student success.

The largest hurdle to achieving that student success is the lack of federal funding. When IDEA became law, the federal government promised to fund 40 percent of the cost. Congress continues to woefully underfund this program, forcing school districts and local taxpayers to make up the difference. Congress must allocate more funding for students with disabilities to fully meet the goals contained in IDEA. As more students are identified with disabilities each year, incremental increases will continue the decline in federal support for this population. Congress must find a way to fund its mandate by meeting the 40% funding commitment.

### ***IDEA By The Numbers***

#### IDEA By The Numbers

- Approximately 7.5 million students aged 3–21 were served under IDEA during the 2022–2023 school year. That number is expected to reach 8.5 million by 2025.
- \$14.2 billion – Amount of federal grant dollars going to states in FY 2025, up from \$12.7 billion in FY 2020.
- Over \$40 billion – Amount estimated needed to meet the federal obligation of 40%
- Roughly 18% – Percentage high water mark for federal funding in meeting the 40% threshold. (2005)
- In FY 2024, the federal contribution covered approximately 14.7% of the average per-pupil cost, falling significantly short of the 40% target.
- \$26 billion – Estimated amount that states and local schools will spend to cover federal commitment for students with disabilities.