
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AJR 7	Hearing Date:	July 16, 2025
Author:	Addis		
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Urgency:		Fiscal:	No
Consultant:	Ian Johnson		

Subject: Special education funding: protection.

SUMMARY

This resolution urges the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to protect federal funding for students with disabilities by ensuring that services and funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and related programs remain uninterrupted and under the administration of the U.S. Department of Education.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Guarantees all children with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under IDEA. (20 U.S.Code § 1400 et seq.)
- 2) Requires education in the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate.
- 3) Provides federal grants to states to partially fund the excess costs of special education.
- 4) Establishes Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) as the coordinating entities for special education funding and services in California. (EC §§ 56195, 56205)

ANALYSIS

This resolution:

- 1) States that the federal government plays a vital role in providing education to students with the greatest needs, including those with disabilities.
- 2) Highlights that California receives over \$1.5 billion in federal IDEA funding annually, which supports special education and related services.
- 3) Notes that federal Medicaid funding also supports education-related services like speech and physical therapy.

- 4) Emphasizes the role of the federal government in defending the rights of students with disabilities and the trust families place in that role.
- 5) Notes that California has over 700 cases pending with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), nearly 400 of which relate to disability discrimination.
- 6) Warns that federal staffing reductions have diminished enforcement capacity and will delay or deny justice for affected families.
- 7) Urges Congress to oppose any funding cuts that would harm educational services for students with disabilities.
- 8) Calls on the President and Congress to ensure continued allocation and oversight of IDEA formula and discretionary grant programs.
- 9) Directs the Chief Clerk of the Assembly to distribute copies of this resolution to federal officials and the author.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "For nearly fifty years, the federal law has promised students with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, through the Department of Education, has been instrumental in providing support and services to our most vulnerable students, a mission that has been reaffirmed by Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

"The Trump Administration has threatened the immense progress we as a country have made for students with disabilities as they attempt to eliminate the Department of Education and the decades of expertise in supporting these students. I call upon the President and Congress to ensure that both services and funding for students with disabilities remain under the Department of Education, where they belong."

- 2) ***Potential consequences of federal proposals.*** Shifting IDEA to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) raises serious concerns about the loss of institutional expertise, the weakening of civil rights enforcement, and a retreat to a "medical model" of disability that segregates students and emphasizes treatment over inclusion. The U.S. Department of Education is uniquely positioned to support the civil and educational rights of students with disabilities. Its dismantling would disrupt enforcement and threaten long-standing progress toward inclusive education.
- 3) ***Federal funding gap and state burden.*** Despite decades of bipartisan support, IDEA has never been fully funded. The law envisions federal funding at 40% of the average per-pupil expenditure (APPE), but California receives less than 10% of its special education funding from the federal government. As a result, local districts are covering a growing share of special education costs—from 46% in

2006–07 to 63% in 2019–20—due in part to stagnant state and federal contributions and rising service demands.

- 4) ***Historical context.*** The IDEA, originally enacted as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, was a direct response to the widespread exclusion and segregation of children with disabilities. The law mandates that students with disabilities be educated alongside their peers whenever possible and with the supports necessary for success. Weakening or dislocating this framework risks returning to an era when disability was treated as a condition to be managed outside of the classroom.
- 5) ***Arguments in support.*** Supporters like San Francisco Unified School District emphasize that IDEA funding is essential to maintaining inclusive educational environments and supporting specialized services. Reductions or administrative shifts would exacerbate federal underfunding and jeopardize decades of civil rights progress.

SUPPORT

California County Superintendents
San Francisco Unified School District
SELPA Administrators of California

OPPOSITION

None received

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