

DISABILITY POLICY SEMINAR

EDUCATION

AAIDD • ASA • AUCD • NACDD • SABE • TASH • The Arc • UCP

BACKGROUND

Access to quality early intervention, Pre-K-12, and higher education is crucial to securing long-term, stable employment and independence for individuals with disabilities.

Since its enactment in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has had a profound impact on students with disabilities by supporting their right to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). IDEA mandates that education be provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) after developing an individualized education program (IEP) with parent and student participation. IDEA also guarantees early intervention services for infants and toddlers.

As students with disabilities transition into post-secondary opportunities, higher education and employment must be fully accessible. Students with disabilities often face barriers in college that prevent them from excelling. Transition planning and vocational rehabilitation need to aid students in designing their future and deciding what next steps would work best for them. As individuals enter the workforce, it is critical to support individuals in obtaining and maintaining competitive, integrated employment.

ISSUES

IDEA authorizes the federal government to pay 40% of the cost of educating students with disabilities. Right now, it only pays 14%. This shortfall results in an inadequate number of special education teachers, crowded classrooms, and limited special education services such as speech therapy or paraprofessionals in the classroom. The widespread use of restraint and seclusion as punishment in schools causes lasting physical and emotional harm and is disproportionately applied to students with disabilities especially Black and brown students. There is currently no federal law to protect students from these harmful practices in schools.

As students enroll into college, they often struggle to navigate the process of receiving accommodations that allow them to thrive. Colleges are unclear about their disability process and students may have to seek out new diagnostic testing at their own costs to reprove their disability. Once individuals transition into the workforce, many are facing discrimination in hiring practices, workplace culture, and policies. Workers with disabilities must be free from discrimination and have the right accommodations, healthcare, and the ability to save without worry of losing benefits. In 2023, 22.5 percent of people with a disability were employed--the highest recorded ratio since

comparable data were first collected in 2008. However, the employment rate for those without a disability in 2023 was 65.8 percent, a huge disparity.

WHAT SHOULD CONGRESS DO?

- Pass the IDEA Full Funding Act of 2023 ([HR 4519/S 2217](#)) to create a pathway to reach the full funding level for students with disabilities.
- Pass the Funding Early Childhood is the Right IDEA Act ([HR 5141](#)).
- Pass the Keeping All Students Safe Act ([HR 3470/S.1750](#)) to end harmful restraint and seclusion.
- Pass the Preparing and Retaining All Educators Act ([HR 4550/S 3681](#)).
- Pass the Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower (RISE) Act ([HR 2401/S 1071](#)).
- Pass the Disability Employment Incentives Act ([S 3076](#)).
- Support legislation that promotes competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities at (202) 387-1968
Association of University Centers on Disabilities at (301) 588-8252 • Autism Society at (301) 657-0881
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities at (202) 506-5813
Self Advocates Becoming Empowered at SABEnation@gmail.com
TASH at (202) 817-3264 • The Arc at (800) 433-5255 • United Cerebral Palsy at (800) 872-582