Dear [Name of Senator/Representative],

**As a constituent and [title] of [school/district name], I write to plead with Congress for some much-needed flexibility in meeting several key mandates under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

Our staff is doing everything we can to work with educators in our region to ensure all students, including students with disabilities, are getting high-quality educational services during this unprecedented pandemic. However, when IDEA was written in 1975, it did not make any exceptions for how educational progress would be achieved and services would be carried out for students with disabilities if schools were closed. It is for this reason we ask that Congress to provide reasonable, temporary, and narrow flexibility around IDEA for school districts during their closure.

**Specifically, we ask for a pause from meeting the multitude of timeline requirements for special education evaluation, eligibility, transition and IEP teams under the law.** It is impossible in some situations for us to meet all the timelines under the law given our inability to physically access necessary documentation, physically touch students, observe students in a classroom setting, and complete assessments that are standardized and in line with appropriate, valid evaluation practices.

**We also ask that districts be given flexibility in adjusting IEPs quickly and appropriately.** Normally decisions about changes in placement or services in an IEP are made after lengthy discussions with an IEP team, which includes the parent and sometimes the child. However, in this situation, the decision to change a child's placement has been forced upon parents and schools by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, if the current IEP does not describe the services that are now being provided in light of a pandemic the district must be able to issue a separate document that contains what will now be provided and in what manner to parents. This will alleviate the need to have a formal IEP meeting with multiple providers, who are desperately needed to provide direct services to children, and ensure that the district is communicating in a transparent way with the parents about what they can offer educationally during these challenging times.

**We also ask that school districts receive the same flexibility as states when it comes to the provision of maintenance of effort (MOE) for districts.** States are able to request that they reduce MOE due to a precipitous decline in financial resources. Given the staggering amount of local funding we expect to lose we believe it’s critical to offer parity to districts in reducing their IDEA spending in light of this crisis.

**Finally, we want to recognize the heroic actions by K-12 educators and administrators who are suddenly being asked to do their jobs in a completely new way, utilize new online platforms and delivery methods for learning—while juggling their own responsibilities to their families and communities.** The best way for Congress to account for these extraordinary actions and situations is to ensure state educational agencies and the districts they serve are not held liable for their inability to meet every procedural hurdle in the law, of which there are more than 600 specific mandates in IDEA, and deem states and districts as being compliant with IDEA unless they are intentionally discriminatory or demonstrate bad faith or gross misjudgment.

I have never been prouder to be an educator than I am today. Schools are stepping up to ensure children with disabilities, and all children who are vulnerable in our communities, are served in this crisis. Please do right by our tireless, committed educators, administrators, and school leaders by including reasonable IDEA flexibility in the next COVID-19 relief package.

Sincerely,

[your name]