



New Jersey Council of Administrators of Special Education

June 2, 2013

Senator Robert Menendez
One Gateway Center, 11th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear Senator Menendez:

NJCASE, an affiliate of the Council for Exceptional Children is a professional group comprised of private and public education administrators from throughout the state of New Jersey, serving students with disabilities.

It has come to our attention that Senator Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, is currently working to bring a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act up for consideration. As part of that process, Senator Harkin said this week that he would like to see vocational rehabilitation agencies take a bigger role in facilitating internships and other real-world experiences for students with disabilities who are in transition.

Additionally, Senator Harkin wants to require vocational rehabilitation agencies in each state to set aside at least 10 percent of their funding to provide "pre-employment transition services" for students with disabilities.

This issue is critically important to both the students we serve and to American society as a whole. As you know, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act has, since its inception, established four outcomes for individuals served under the Act. These include (1) Equal opportunity (2) Economic self sufficiency (3) Full participation in society and (4) Independent living. The effort alluded to by Senator Harkin focuses on all four of these outcomes and particularly outcomes two and four.

A recent report issued by ASAH, a statewide not-for-profit organization, shows that the full cost in New Jersey to educate multiply involved students in any setting, public or private, can exceed \$45,000. Typically such students are educated at public expense from the age of 3-21. On average the education of these students would total to \$810,000. As educators we wholeheartedly support the public expenditures on behalf of our students but we are distraught when after eighteen years of education, expense and effort these same students are unemployed and reliant on their families for their life needs.

Sadly, this is often the case. In New Jersey, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is the primary agency that services adults with disabilities. Their present staffing and funding places severe limits on their services and their involvement occurs only after graduation of the student. As a result there is very little transition time between school and adult agencies leading to diminished prospects for our students.

NJCASE actively promotes Senator Harkins' efforts as a first step to coordinated efforts, smart spending and most importantly, more positive outcomes for our students. Please lend your support to this critically important issue.

Sincerely,



James V. McLaughlin, Ed.D.
President, NJCASE



The voice and vision of special education