

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

Honorable David Obey, Chairman
House Labor/HHS/Education
Appropriations Subcommittee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member
House Labor/HHS/Education
Appropriations Subcommittee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

During last year's enactment of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (P.L. 1110-315), Congress made a historic commitment to students with disabilities by establishing new provisions to expand access to postsecondary education. These provisions will help general education teachers effectively instruct students with disabilities in elementary and secondary school, remove common barriers to postsecondary education, and increase access to postsecondary opportunities which rarely exist for students with intellectual disabilities.

We respectfully ask you to build on this commitment with a \$70 million investment in the Fiscal Year 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Appropriations bill for these disability provisions.

Teach to Reach Grants	\$15 million
Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High Need Areas at Colleges of Education	\$15 million
Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Coordinating Center for Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities	\$15 million
National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities	\$3.0 million
Commission on Accessible Materials	\$1.5 million
Model Demonstration Programs to Support Improved Access to Postsecondary Instructional Materials for Students with Print Disabilities	\$5 million
Demonstration Projects to Support Postsecondary Faculty, Staff and Administrators in Educating Students with Disabilities	\$15 million

Teach to Reach Grants (Sec. 251)

Teach to Reach Grants were designed to address a significant problem in K-12 education – that general education teachers are not well prepared to instruct students with disabilities. This lack of training contributes to the low performance of students with disabilities. These grants will go jointly to programs preparing general education teachers and those preparing special education teachers.

Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High Need Areas at Colleges of Education (Sec. 258)

A critical shortage of special education faculty at institutions of higher education contributes to the chronic shortage of special education teachers. This program will support students preparing to become teacher educators in the high need fields: math, science, special education, English Language Learners.

Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Coordinating Center for Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (Sec. 766-769)

New model programs were authorized to develop degree, certificate, or non-degree programs at institutions of higher education for students with intellectual disabilities. These programs are designed to focus on: academic enrichment; socialization; independent living; and integrated work experiences and career skills that lead to gainful employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities. A coordinating center was authorized for the model programs for students with intellectual disabilities. The coordinating center will provide: recommendations related to the development of standards for such programs; technical assistance; and evaluations.

National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities (Sec. 777 a)

A national technical assistance center was authorized to provide cross-disability information and technical assistance nationally. The center will assist current and prospective students with disabilities. It will also assist faculty, staff, and administration of institutions of higher education to improve services, accommodations, retention rates, and completion rates of students with disabilities. The center will evaluate, improve, and disseminate information related to the delivery of high quality disability support services at institutions of higher education and report recommendations.

Commission on Accessible Materials (Sec. 772)

Many students with disabilities cannot effectively participate in higher education because the instructional materials are not accessible to them. This long standing and challenging problem will be assessed by a Commission representing all stake holders and recommendations will be made for remedies.

Model Demonstration Programs to Support Improved Access to Postsecondary Instructional Materials for Students with Print Disabilities (Sec. 773-775)

Model demonstrations were authorized to promote development of systems to improve the quality and timely delivery of course materials in specialized formats for students with print disabilities.

Demonstration Projects to Support Postsecondary Faculty, Staff, and Administrators in Educating Students with Disabilities (Sec. 760-765)

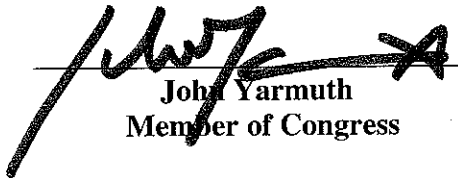
First authorized in 1998, these are competitive awards made to institutions of higher education for development of model practices for faculty so that they are skilled in instructing students with disabilities. Activities were expanded during reauthorization, and include the development of: teaching methods and strategies; effective transition practices; distance learning; and disability career pathways.

An investment in these programs will reap countless economic benefits and give exceptional students the opportunity to reach their full potential. Only 12 percent of working-age adults

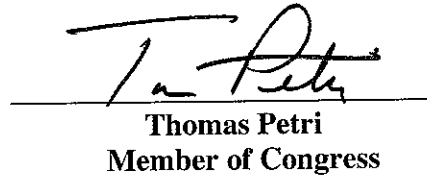
with disabilities currently hold a college degree, and the employment rate for this population is just 36.9 percent (American Community Survey, 2007). Clearly, we must do more, which is why we are urging you to provide funding for these disability programs in the FY2010 appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we hope we can count on your support.

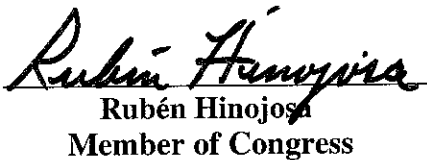
Sincerely,



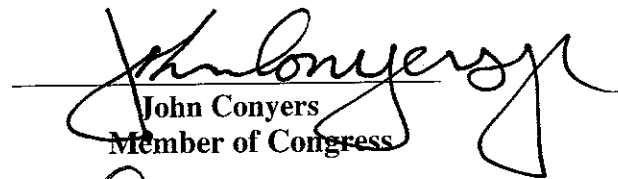
John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



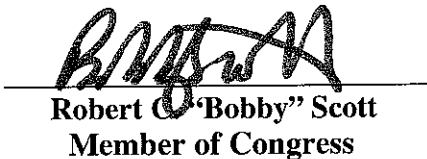
Thomas Petri
Member of Congress



Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress



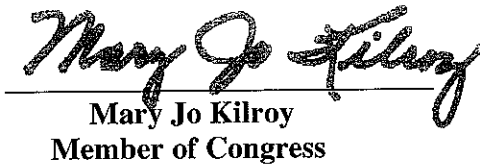
John Conyers
Member of Congress



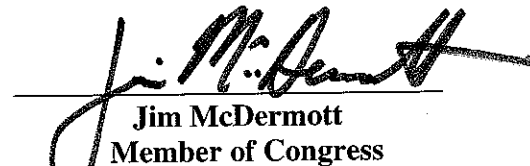
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



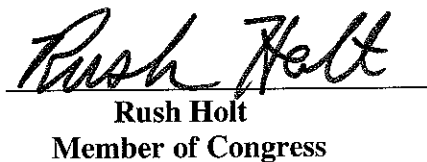
Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



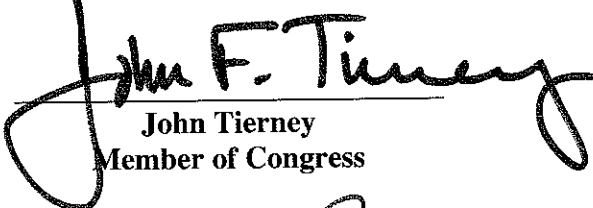
Mary Jo Kilroy
Member of Congress



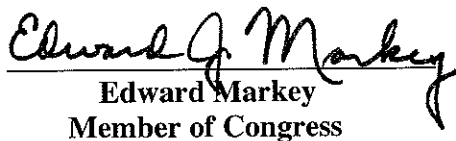
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



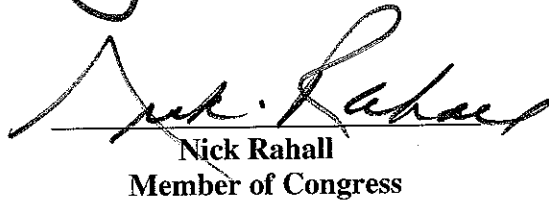
Rush Holt
Member of Congress



John Tierney
Member of Congress



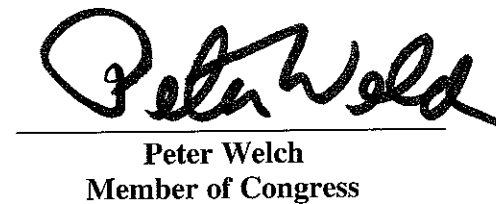
Edward Markey
Member of Congress



Nick Rahall
Member of Congress



Barney Frank
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress