July 9, 2015

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), I urge you to refrain from making any changes to the participation rate or amendments that would allow parents or children to opt out of the annual assessments required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

AUCD is network of interdisciplinary centers advancing policy and practice for and with individuals with disabilities, their families and communities.

Since the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law, graduation rates for students with disabilities have increased from 48% in 2001 to 64% in 2013. Math and Reading scores have also increased significantly. If the participation rate requirement is reduced or students are able to opt out, parents and teachers will not have the information they need about how their children with disabilities are doing in school. We believe this will lead to too many students with disabilities being discouraged from taking the standardized tests, which in turn, will subvert the validity of data about their educational outcomes.

We urge the Congress to preserve annual testing of all students, disaggregated by race, income and disabilities, and to ensure that these results are made public. We do not want to return to the days before No Child Left Behind when districts could hide their failure to teach minority and other underserved students by submerging those results in school-wide averages.

Thank you for considering our views on this issue. We look forward to working with you to enact a strong federal education law that protects all students.

Sincerely,

Andrew Imparato
Executive Director, AUCD