



March 18, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SE
Washington D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

On behalf of the IDEA Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA), we would like to take this opportunity to introduce our organization and to offer our congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. As President and Executive Director of ITCA, we offer our assistance in the important work of the Department of Education, particularly as it relates to young children and their families. We appreciate the priority the Trump Administration places on the importance of early childhood initiatives and investments in young children and their families. We look forward to supporting you in this important work.

ITCA represents states and other jurisdictions responsible for the implementation of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) designed to provide services and supports for infants and toddlers who have or who are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities and their families. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed into law this addition to the IDEA, creating the Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Program. Through this state program, the Department of Education provides funds to assist states with implementing statewide systems of services for young children with disabilities from birth to age three and their families. Currently, states provide early intervention services to 5.8% of the population of children who are birth to three years of age. Part C provides the necessary services and supports that allow infants and toddlers with disabilities to effectively participate in everyday activities in their home and in their communities and to achieve positive outcomes.

Part C Early Intervention is unique among education programs. Early Intervention is not carried out primarily in the classroom or clinic. In recognition of the research about how very young children learn best, Early Intervention services are provided in the child's natural environment within the context of their typical routines and activities. This is most often the child's home, but also in childcare and other places where typically developing children play and spend time with their family. A foundational principle of Early Intervention is that a child's parents and other caregivers are his or her most important teachers. Thus, Early Intervention services are determined with the child's parents. These services and supports are directed both to the child and to the child's parents so the family can build on their existing strengths and increase their capacity to support their child's learning and development.

States are facing significant and growing challenges in meeting the needs of the children identified under Part C of IDEA. There has been a dramatic increase in the diagnosis of children identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (4 to 6 children per 1000) and each year, states experience a significant increase in intensive service needs for these children. In addition, incidence rates for neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and maternal opioid use increased nearly 5-fold in the United States between 2000 and 2012. (JAMA Pediatrics, 2016). States continue to increase their investment in Part C.

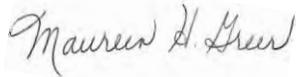
We know you share our commitment to improving outcomes for the very youngest members of our society and their families. We have also attached the ITCA Transition Priority Statement, outlining our priorities for the coming years. We request the opportunity to meet with you or your staff.

The staff of the ITCA, Maureen Greer, Executive Director mhmgreer@aol.com and Sharon Walsh, Governmental Liaison walshtaylo@aol.com can serve as a resource on Part C of IDEA for you and your staff. We look forward to working with you on behalf of infants and toddlers and their families.

Sincerely,



Lynn Skene Johnson,
ITCA President



Maureen Greer,
ITCA Executive Director

Cc: Ruth Ryder, U.S. Department of Education