



# Background and Supporting Information

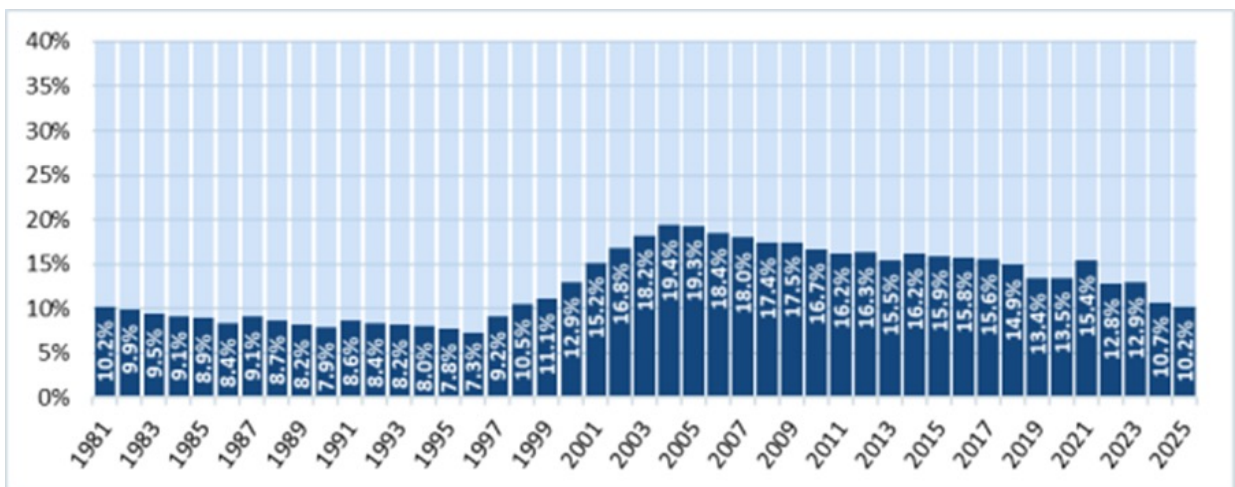
***“If we are going to make a real commitment to full and appropriate services and expect the states to carry through on this commitment, we will have to put our money where our mouth is.”*** Senator Harrison Williams, upon introduction in 1972

Concerned about an estimated 1 million students with disabilities who were not being served, in 1975 Congress passed legislation to guarantee a Free Appropriate Public Education to these students. Knowing the mandate to provide these services would be costly for local school districts, Congress promised to provide 40 percent of the costs to educate students to cover the excess cost of special services. In the first year after the Act’s passage (1976-1977), 3.694 million students were served under the Act. The Department estimates that 8.3 million students will be served under the Act in 2027.

Sources: CRS Report cited below, US Dept of Ed, A History of the IDEA (Website); Dept of Education FY 2027 Budget Request to Congress

## Historic Funding Levels for IDEA

After rapid escalation in the IDEA funding percentage in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the funding percentage began to decline in 2005.



Source: Congressional Research Service – Prepared by Congressional Research Service using data from the U. S. Department of Education

Source: CRS Report R44624, Kyrie Dragoo 2/13/2026