

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 45

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Introduced: 3/20/26
Referred: Education

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the United States Congress to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities**
2 **Education Act.**

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **WHEREAS** the state is committed to providing children in the state with a high-
5 quality education and ensuring each child has the opportunity to succeed in reaching the
6 child's full learning potential with an enriched, safe, and encouraging environment; and

7 **WHEREAS** the state provides access to education through public schools, including
8 neighborhood schools, charter schools, correspondence study programs, and homeschool
9 programs; and

10 **WHEREAS** the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that
11 public schools provide a free appropriate public education to eligible children with
12 disabilities, implemented through a tailored individualized education program and provided in
13 the least restrictive environment possible; and

14 **WHEREAS** eligibility for an individualized education program requires a strict,
15 rigorous, legal process using evaluations conducted by highly qualified and trained
16 professionals who provide standardized assessments and analyze comparison data involving

1 input from parents, educators, specialists, and administrative officials; and

2 **WHEREAS** an individualized education program is a legal and binding agreement,
3 and school districts are required to adhere to a child's individualized education program,
4 regardless of location and time of the school year; and

5 **WHEREAS** over 7,000,000 children in the United States qualify for special education
6 services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, an increase of more than 12
7 percent in the last decade; and

8 **WHEREAS** 15 percent of the student population in public schools in the state have an
9 individualized education program in one or more of the 13 federally defined disability
10 categories, including autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment,
11 intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment,
12 specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual
13 impairment; and

14 **WHEREAS** the state Department of Education and Early Development reports that
15 the number of children who are eligible for an individualized education program increased
16 from 18,023 students in 2014 to 20,578 students in 2024; and

17 **WHEREAS** there are waitlists for children to receive special education services
18 across the state in districts, communities, educational services agencies, and homeschool
19 programs; and

20 **WHEREAS** inadequate funding weakens not only traditional school district
21 programs, but also weakens many organizations that families depend on for critical support
22 and essential respite care; and

23 **WHEREAS**, when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was enacted, the
24 United States Congress committed to fund 40 percent of the average per-pupil cost for special
25 education, but the federal government has never fulfilled this commitment; and

26 **WHEREAS** the federal government currently only funds approximately 13 percent of
27 the average per-pupil cost for special education; and

28 **WHEREAS**, since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was enacted, the
29 closest the federal government has come to meeting the federal government's funding
30 commitment was in 2004 - 2006, when the federal government funded only 18 percent of the
31 average per-pupil cost for special education; and

1 **WHEREAS** federal funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has
2 not kept pace with actual costs and has remained stagnant or declined when adjusted for
3 inflation, placing an undue financial burden on families, local school districts, and supporting
4 agencies; and

5 **WHEREAS** this lack of federal funding has at times created an adversarial and
6 litigious relationship among public education providers and families who are seeking the
7 funding support promised to children by federal law; and

8 **WHEREAS** the state faces unique challenges in delivering special education services,
9 including vast geographical distances and the high cost of recruiting and retaining specialized
10 providers in rural and remote communities; and

11 **WHEREAS** teacher vacancies in the state are at an all-time high, especially among
12 special education and related service providers, leaving districts at risk of limiting services,
13 being unable to fill positions, contracting for outside services, and paying for expensive travel
14 costs to provide specially designed instruction for children with disabilities; and

15 **WHEREAS**, if the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act were fully funded, the
16 state's schools and communities could better provide children with highly qualified special
17 education teachers, essential and well-trained paraprofessionals, school psychologists, speech-
18 language specialists, occupational and physical therapists, and behavior interventionists,
19 particularly in underserved regions; and

20 **WHEREAS** fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act would
21 ensure children with disabilities receive the necessary resources to thrive in an inclusive
22 environment, which would likely result in higher graduation rates, increased workforce
23 participation, and greater economic contributions to the state; and

24 **WHEREAS**, when children receive the services and accommodations they are entitled
25 to through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, children have increased potential
26 to be skilled, productive, and talented members of our society, fulfilling a lifetime of hopes,
27 dreams, and aspirations; and

28 **WHEREAS** H.R. 2598, known as the "IDEA Full Funding Act," was introduced in
29 the 119th United States Congress and provides for regular, mandatory increases in funding for
30 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to meet the federal government's promise to
31 fund 40 percent of the average per-pupil cost for special education; and

1 **WHEREAS** H.R. 2598 specifically puts federal special education funding on a path to
2 full funding, by incrementally increasing funding from fiscal year 2026 through fiscal year
3 2035; and

4 **WHEREAS** the federal government has the financial capacity to fully fund the
5 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the continued underfunding of the
6 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a matter of policy choice rather than economic
7 necessity;

8 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature reaffirms its commitment to
9 provide all of the state's children with a free and public education, including by advocating for
10 full federal funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and be it

11 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature strongly urges the United
12 States Congress to fulfill its long-standing commitment to students with disabilities by
13 immediately passing H.R. 2598 or by increasing federal funding for the Individuals with
14 Disabilities Education Act to fund, at a minimum, 40 percent of the average per-pupil cost for
15 special education and then maintaining this funding level in perpetuity.

16 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President
17 of the United States; the Honorable JD Vance, Vice President of the United States and
18 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the U.S. House of
19 Representatives; the Honorable Steve Scalise, Majority Leader of the U.S. House of
20 Representatives; the Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of
21 Representatives; the Honorable Chuck Grassley, President pro tempore of the U.S. Senate; the
22 Honorable John Thune, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Charles E.
23 Schumer, Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Linda McMahon, United States
24 Secretary of Education; the Honorable Mike Dunleavy, Governor of Alaska; the Honorable
25 Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Nicholas
26 Begich, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; and all other
27 members of the 119th United States Congress.