

The National Coalition on Deafblindness Continues Advocacy Campaign

The National Coalition on Deafblindness continues an advocacy campaign to increase the amount of federal monies allocated to services for children who are deafblind. We want to add \$2 million dollars over the current budget in fiscal year 2009 to address the resource needs of children who are deafblind and their families. We are requesting that approximately \$1.4 million of these monies be allocated to the state projects, \$350,000 would support the family-focused activities of the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness and \$250,000 would be used to strengthen personnel preparation programs.

Although we did not get our budget request included in the final FY 08 budgets, our request was included in the House budget and we continue to develop a network. Many families in more than 35 states contacted their representatives and have started to form a relationship with them. We had good support in both the house and senate. We can build upon that. This year again, we are working to get the request for **increased funding for deafblind services** included in both the House and Senate Appropriation bills for the **FY 09 budget**. It is important to know that the Coalition is not requesting an earmark. This request is for an increase in the appropriation for an established and valuable program.

We will have sponsors in both chambers to lead the effort to send group letters to the Appropriations Committees. Our immediate activities will begin in the House. Rep. Markey is again championing this effort. We want each of you to **contact your representatives by phone or email** and ask him or her to sign the group letter. Last year, eighteen representatives signed on. This year we want to at least double that amount. That means that we need your help now.

Key points to include in your letter:

- Federal monies support both state and national technical assistance programs that provide crucial support to children, their families and their educational staff.
- Most children who are deafblind are educated in their local school districts, districts that most often have no experience or expertise in deafblindness.
- Technical assistance from both the state and national deafblind projects are the primary way for local districts to get the training and support they need to effectively educate these children.
- Despite a doubling in the population of children who are deafblind over the last twenty years, federal funding has remained level. Inflation has further reduced the purchasing power of these funds to nearly half of what they could provide for in 1985.
- Tell your story and include information about how support from people who understand deafblindness has made a difference.

If you have any questions or would like help identifying your representatives, please contact us at 617-972-7768 or visit our web site at <http://www.dbcoalition.org/>