

LEADING WELL UNDER PRESSURE

2026 MASE Fall Leadership Conference

October 21-23, 2026 | Brainerd, Minnesota

Leading Through Uncertainty: Navigating Federal Change Without Losing Your Focus



Agenda

- Election Season
- Changes at the Department of Education
- Congressional Action
- Federal and State Funding
- Changes to Federal Grants
- CASE Work
- What Does This Mean for You?

It’s Always Election Season

House of Representatives

- Nearly all polls expect partisan control to switch.
- Dems need just 4 pickups to take control.
- Majority rules for everything.

Senate

- Republicans hold a 3-seat majority.
- Dems need to pick up 4 seats for majority because of the VP.
- Working together is a must.

Changes at the U.S. Department of Education

- On 6/16 – 2 new IAAs bring the total number to 14.
- IAAs moved OSERS to HHS & OCR to DOJ.
- As of mid-September, all OSERS staff were working out of the HHS building.
- Kelly Rogers resigned as Assistant Secretary for OSERS.
- Assistant Secretary for OESE Kirsten Baesler took over.
- Still no details provided on the OSERS IAA.

CASE Statement

“Congress has consistently reaffirmed through every reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that students with disabilities achieve the best outcomes when special education, general education, and accountability systems are aligned within the same federal agency,” said Phyllis Wolfram, Executive Director for the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE). Moving the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to the Department of Justice…

CASE Statement - cont.

would create unnecessary barriers to collaboration between general and special education and undermine decades of bipartisan efforts to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. IDEA is fundamentally an education law—not a healthcare law—and should continue to be administered by education policy experts who understand schools, teaching, learning, and accountability. CASE strongly opposes this proposal and urges policymakers to keep the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education."

Congressional Action on the IAAs

- The House Education & Workforce Committee advanced a legislative package of 10 bills that would codify many of the IAAs in federal law.
  - All 9 out of 10 bills were approved strictly on party lines.
  - Rep. Kiley (D-CA), Chair of the K-12 Ed Subcommittee, voted against one bill.

Congressional Action on the IAAs cont.

- S. 5046 – introduced by Senators Kaine (D-VA), Murkowski (R-AK), and Collins (R-ME).
  - Passed by Senate HELP Committee 13-9
- H.R. 10232 – introduced by Representatives Mannion (D-NY) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA).
- These legislative bills would reverse all IAAs related to OSERS, OESE, OPE, OIE.

Congressional Action on the IAAs cont.

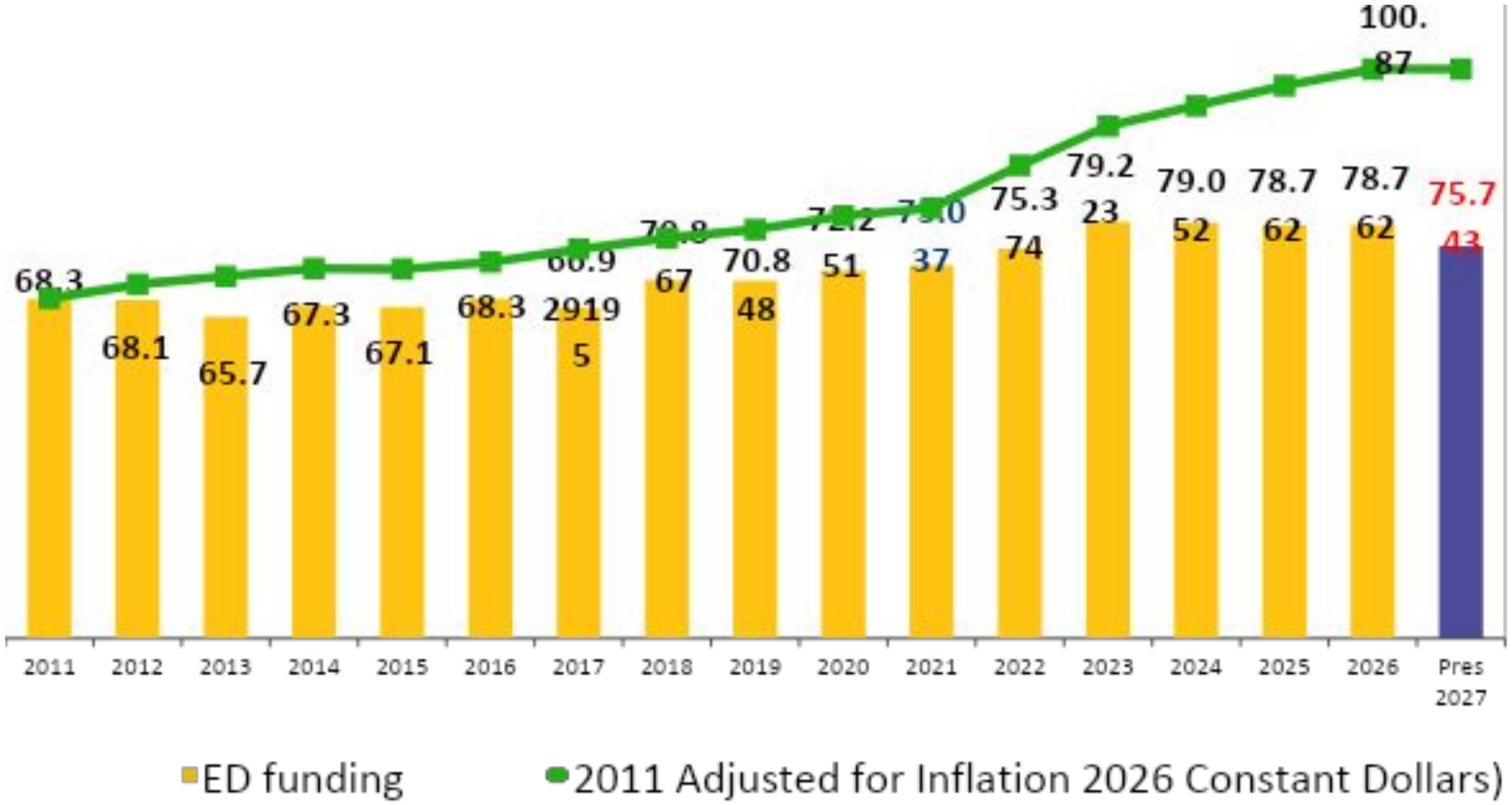
- Neither bill is likely to pass either chamber this Congress.
- Most likely solution is language included in the bill to fund the federal government to reverse these IAAs.
  - Happens often, including in the FFY26 funding bill.
- The election will affect what happens next.

Federal Fiscal Year 2027 Funding

- Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) through Dec 11, 2026.
- Funds all agencies in the federal government at current (FFY26) levels through that date.
- Means there will be no government shutdown before the election.
- CR included language pausing any action on the OMB grants rule.

President's FFY27 Budget Cuts Education: Funding already failed to keep pace with need of inflation.

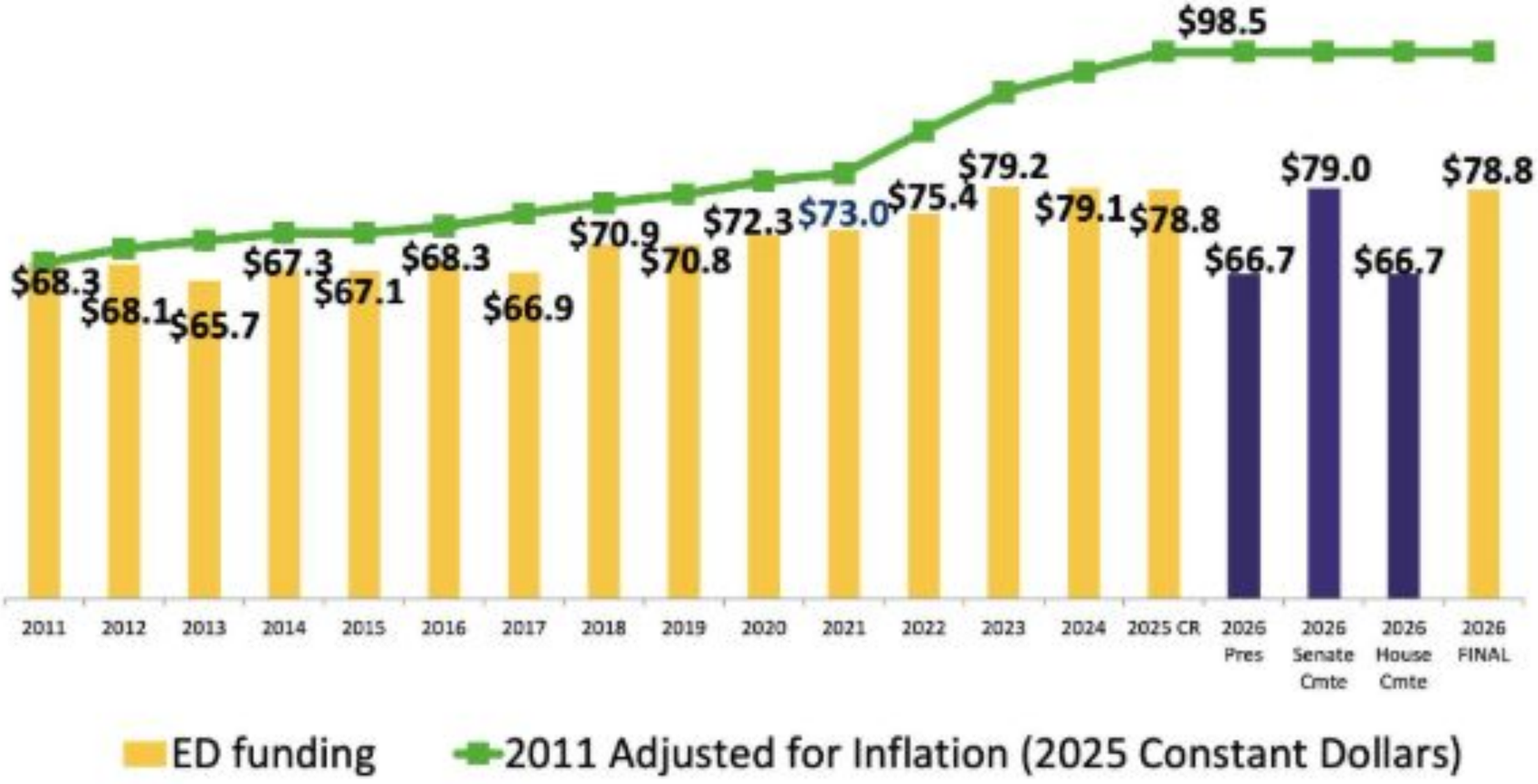
Department of Education (DOE) DIscretionary Funding in Billions of Dollars



2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, & 2023 totals reflect rescissions of previously appropriated ED funding

Congress Maintains Education Funding for FFY26 - but it stays below FFY11 level in inflation-adjusted dollars.

DOE Discretionary Funding in Billions of Dollars.

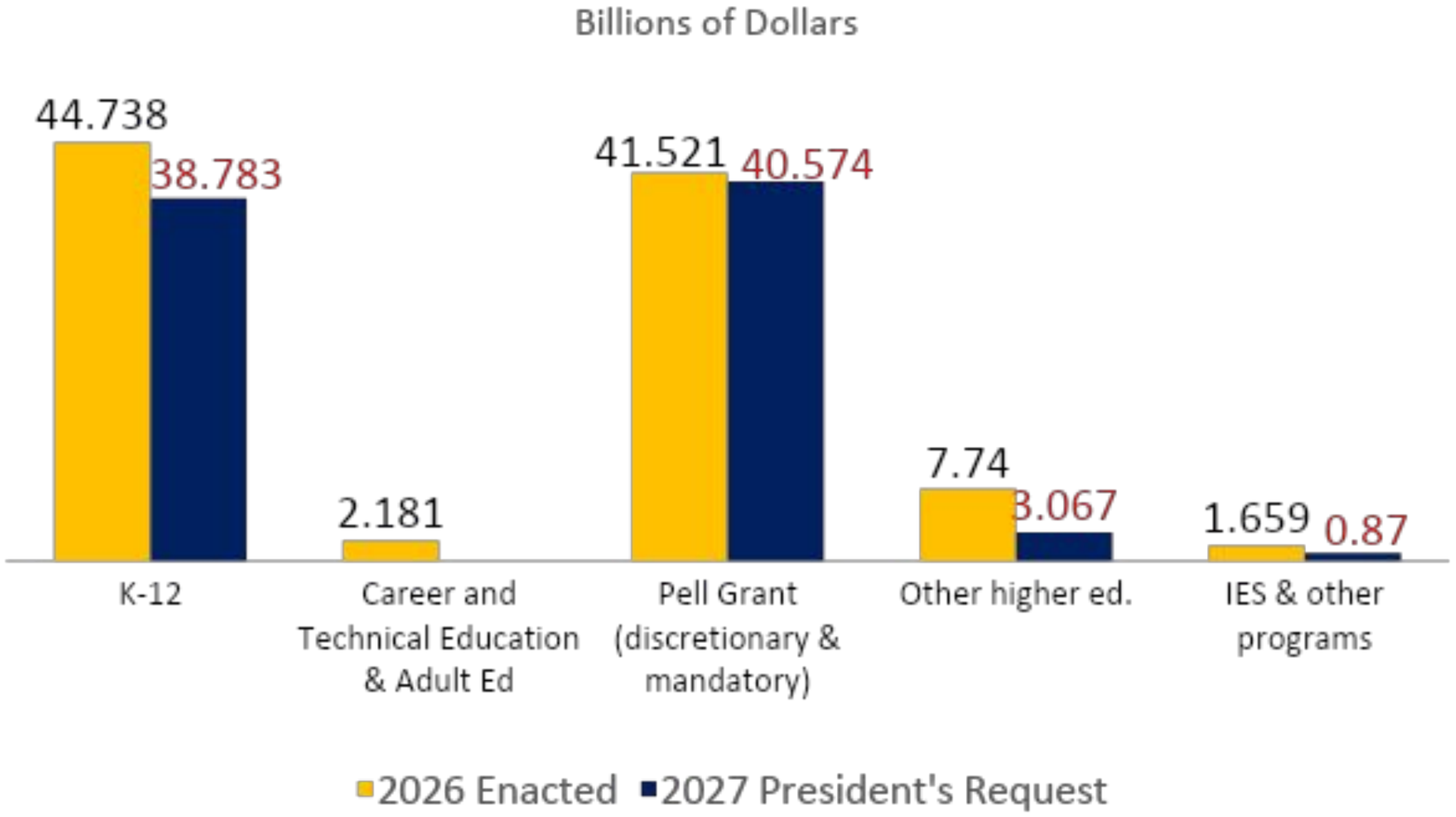


2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, & 2023 totals reflect rescissions of previously appropriated ED funding

COMMITTEE F
EDUCATION FUN

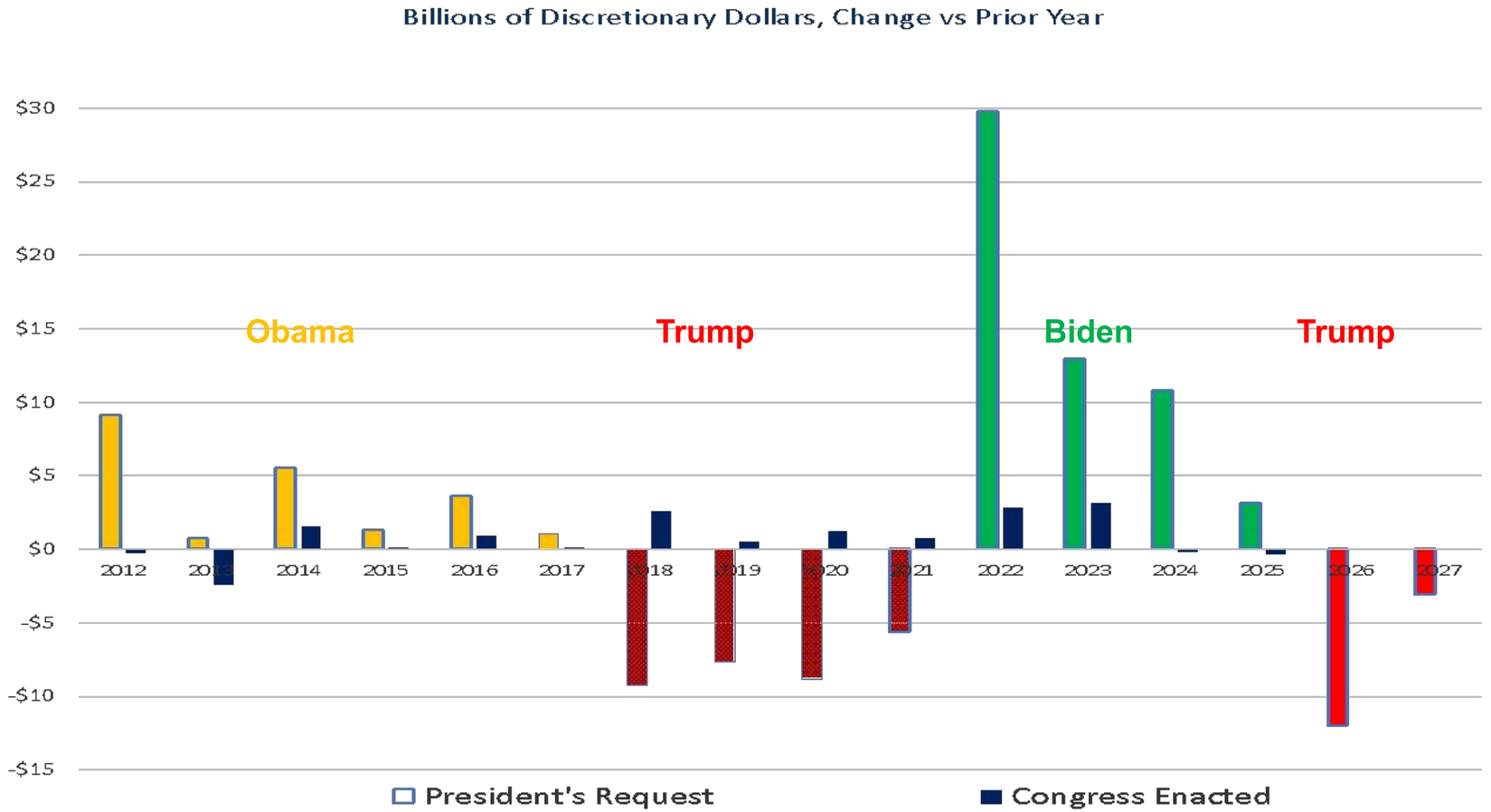
President's FFY27 Education Budget Cuts

$14 Billion from Existing Programs



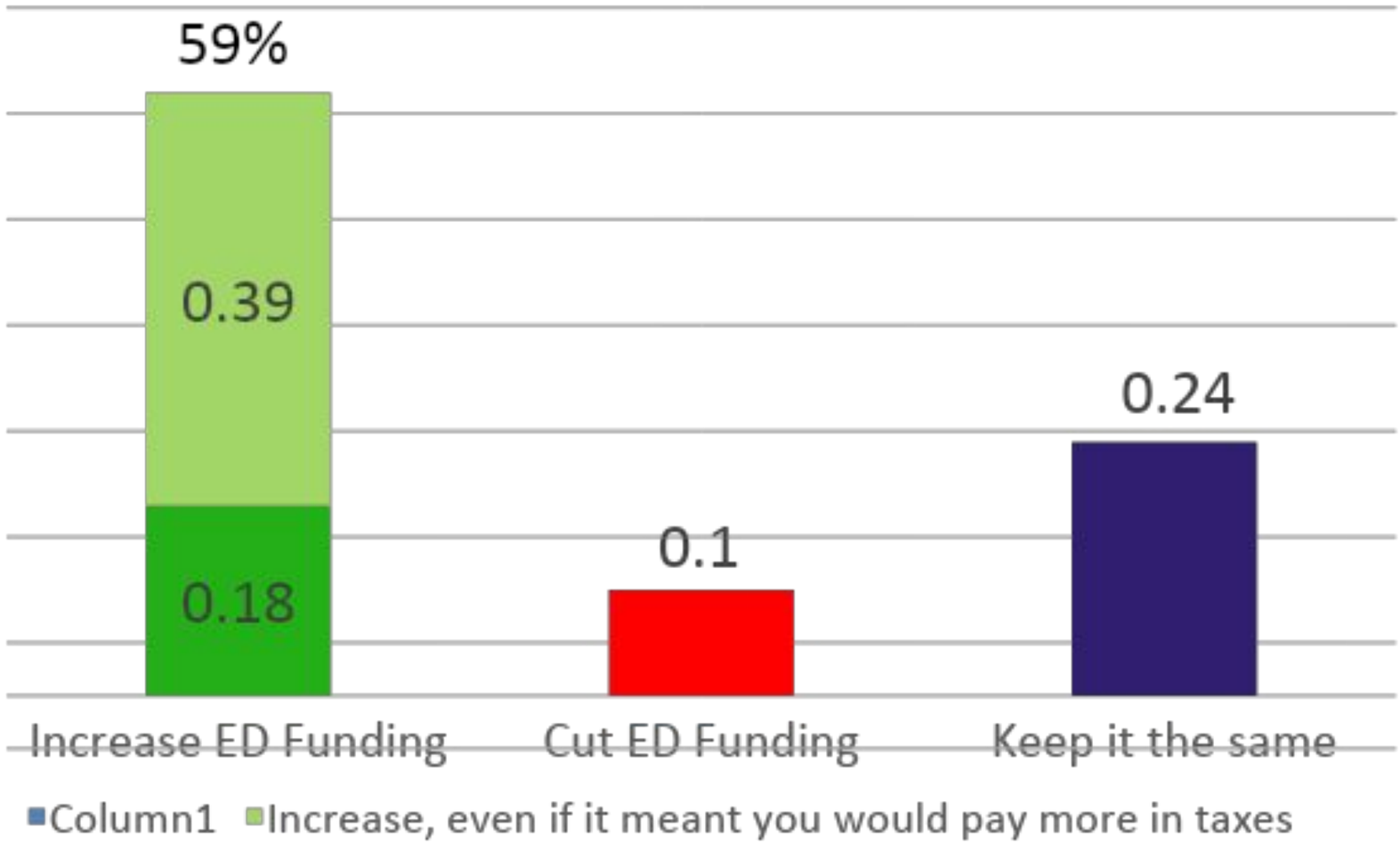
Source: DOE FFY27 request and CBO 2026 Pell Grant baseline estimates.

DOE Funding: President's Requested Change and Enacted Change



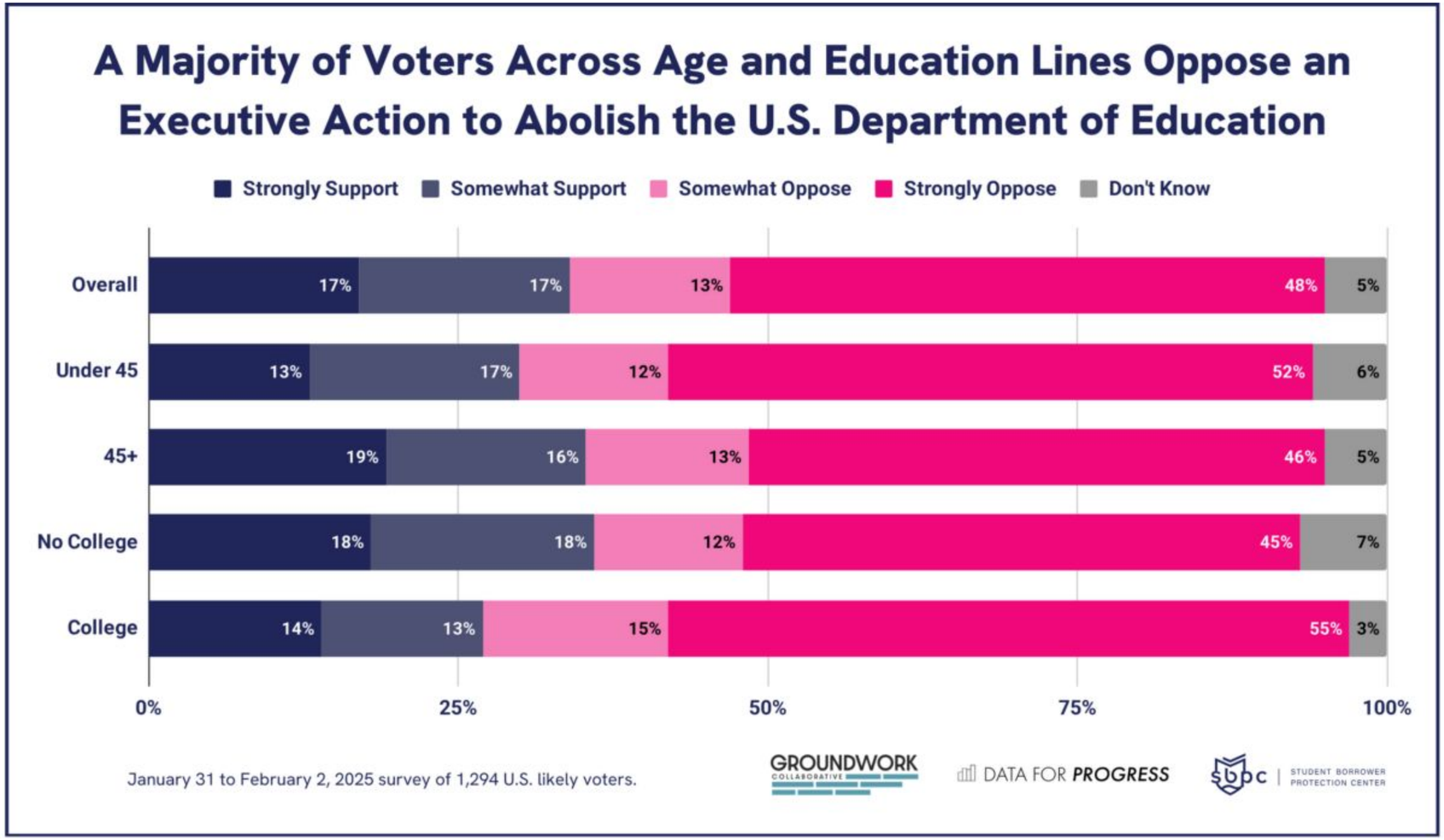
Source: DOE FFY27 request and budget history tables.

Majority of voters want to increase federal education funding.



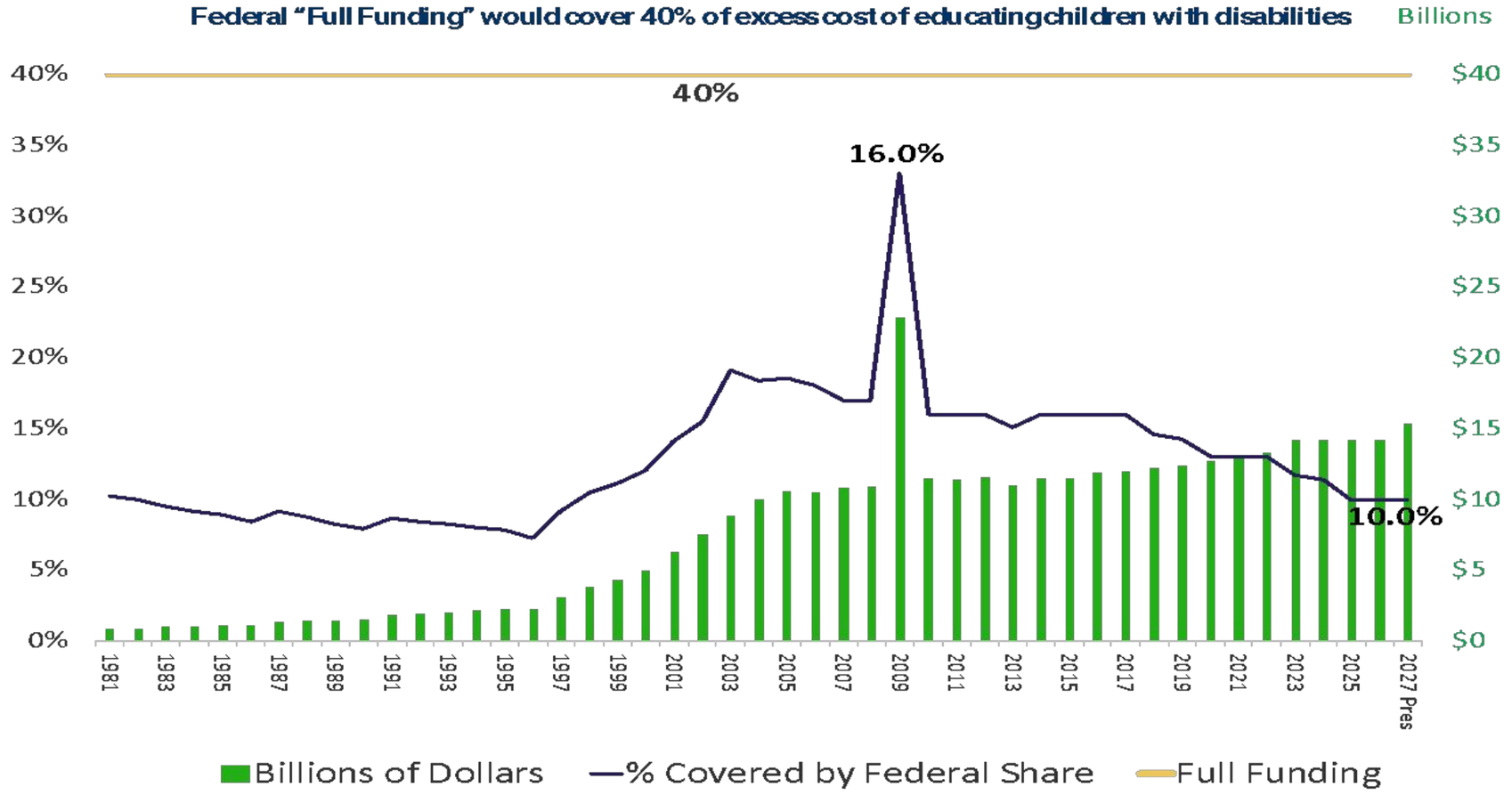
Source: All4Edpoll conducted Oct. 30-Nov. 5, 2024
https://all4ed.org/publication/voters-views-on-education-in-2024/

A Majority of Voters Across Age and Education Lines Oppose an Executive Action to Abolish the U.S. DOE



Source: [Data for Progress poll](#) conducted Jan, 31-Feb. 2, 2025

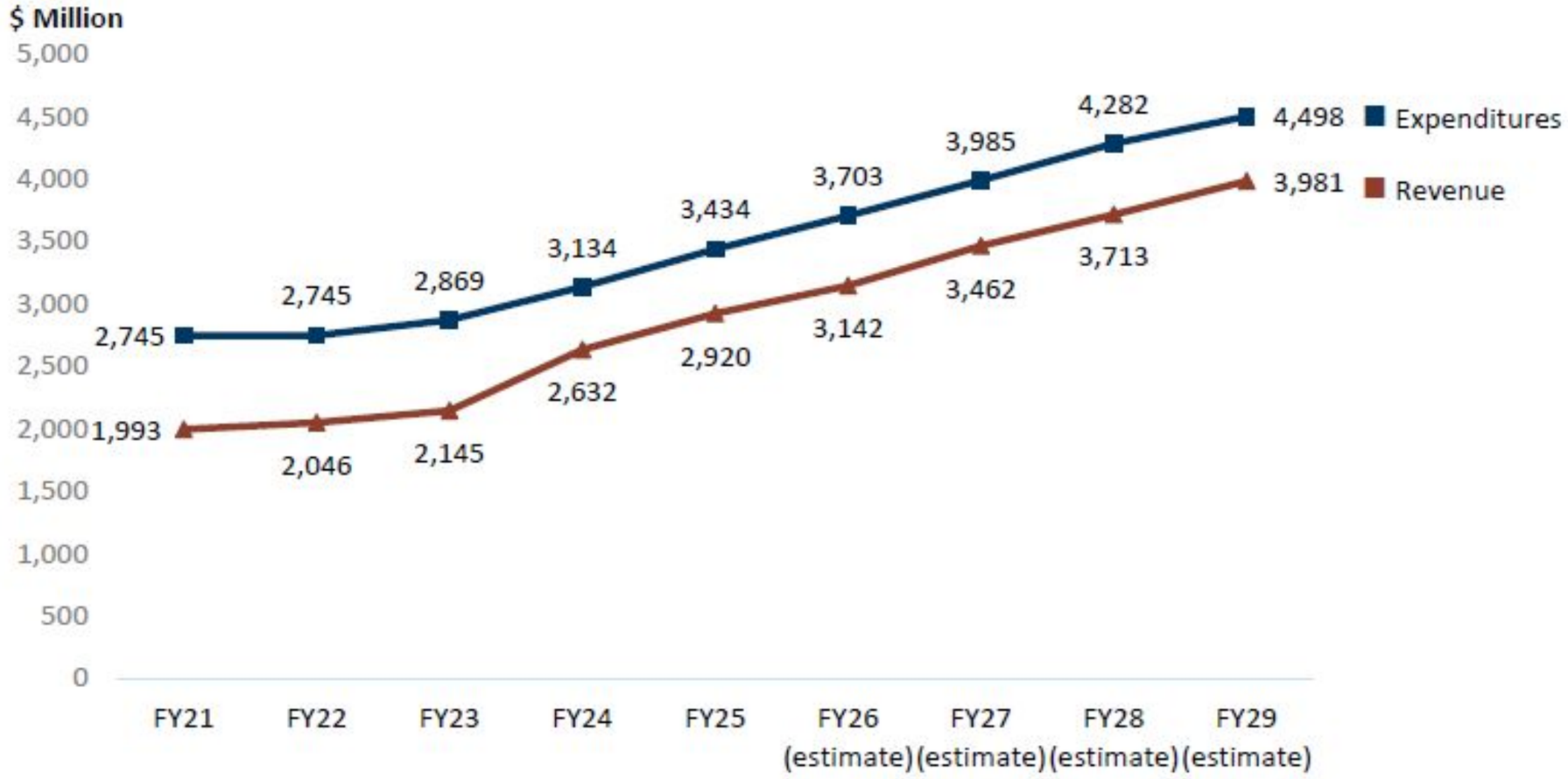
Special Education: Federal Share at ¼ of “Full Funding,” Leaving Cost Burden to State and Local Budgets.



Source: CRS and ED funding history.

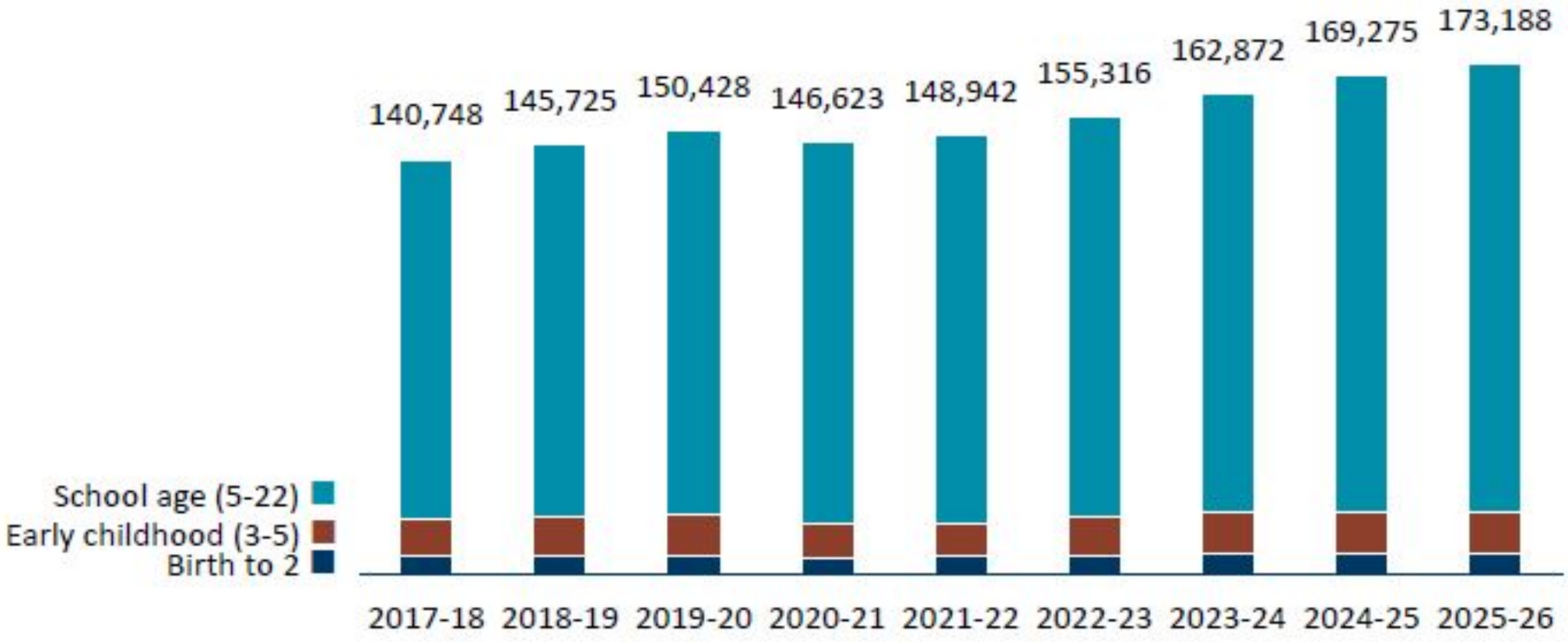
COMMITTEE F EDUCATION FUN

Minnesota special education expenditures and revenues



Source: Minnesota MFR Reports

Minnesota special education enrollment, students age birth through 22 years



Source: December 1 Child Count on Special Education



Federal Grant Rules and Other Policy Updates

OMB Uniform Grants Regulations

- The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed new rules for all federal grants.
- Senior agency officials would review discretionary grants before funds are awarded. They would decide whether projects follow the law and support federal priorities and the “national interest.”
- Agencies could end some grants if the work no longer supports program goals, agency priorities, or the national interest.
- The proposal would end fixed-amount awards and add new reporting, risk review, and oversight requirements.
- OMB said it wanted the final rule to take effect on October 1, 2026, but now not allowed to do so through Dec 11th.

DOE General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR)

- ED has proposed changes to the rules it uses to award and manage grants.
- Would give extra points to applicants agreeing to lower indirect costs.
- The Secretary of ED would have clearer authority over continuation awards. ED could delay, reduce, divide, or stop future funding.
- ED would state more clearly that it may end certain discretionary grants when allowed by law.
- Some grant priorities and notices would no longer have to appear in the Federal Register. Instead, they could appear only on Grants.gov.
- CASE submitted comments opposing these changes.

Other CASE Actions

Preparing for the 120th Congress.

CASE Legislative Priorities: 120th Congress

Utilize the CASE Policy Statements

Galesburg Community Unit School District No. 205 v. N.T.

CASE will be signing on to an Amicus Brief with NSAA, AASA, COSSBA, NSBA, and ASBO.

The question for the Supreme Court is whether IDEA permits courts to use evidence of subsequent events to diminish the required deference to administrative decisions and effectively decide placement disputes anew, rather than reviewing the appropriateness of the original decision.

NSAA Amicus Brief

How can you get involved?

Case's new all-in-one legislative platform: Quorum

- Grassroots action center
- staff directory
- Legislative tracking
- Topical Information Packets
  - CASE - MOE Toolkit
  - CASE - Funding Toolkit Packet
  - CASE - Staffing Shortages Toolkit Packet

- Contacting your Senators and Representatives takes less than a minute!
- Use the templates provided by CASE
  - Edit the letter to make it more personal and/or add a story, which makes your outreach even more effective.

We Need Your Stories

- Share how you and your district work with OSERS, OCR, or any other offices at the Department of Education.
- Policymakers need to hear the realities from the field.

New Legislative Action Center - Let’s Go There!

CASE Action Center

This updated site is being built right now. Our goal is to create an advocacy one stop shop for resources, trainings and how-to’s. This collective work and your input will make a difference!

How Does All of this Uncertainty Impact Us?

Beyond the Headlines

What a Move of OSERS to HHS Really Means

Leadership Lens:
Headlines describe events. Leaders examine systems.

Emma’s First Day

Everything seems effortless.





But effortless doesn’t happen by accident.



SISP

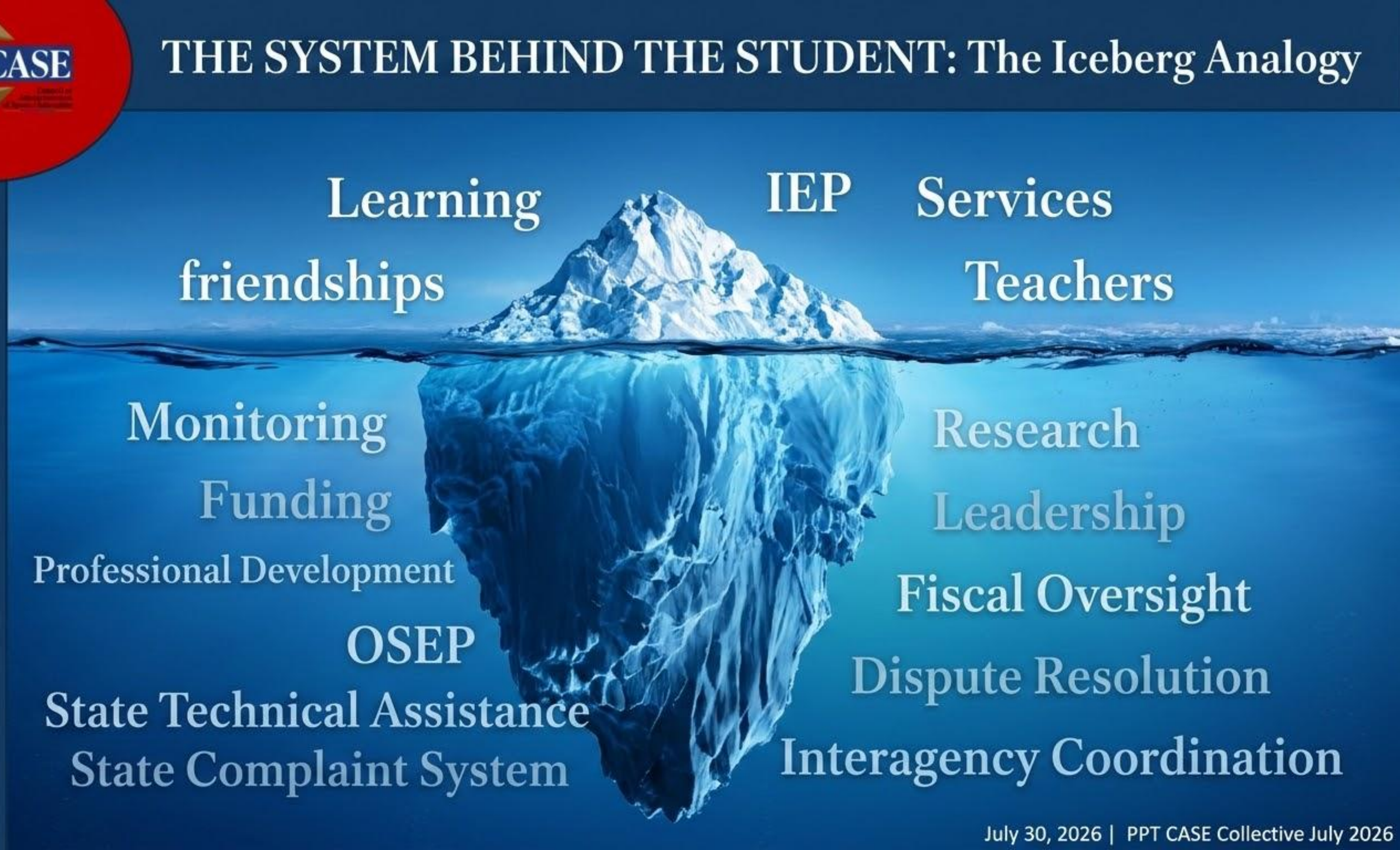
Teacher

Student

Learning

Emma arrives in her classroom.

THE SYSTEM BEHIND THE STUDENT: The Iceberg Analogy



Beyond the Headlines

Former federal officials oppose special education interagency agreement

Administration Announces Plan to Move Special Education

OUR KIDS ARE STUDENTS, NOT PATIENTS.

IDEA IS AT RISK—WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

OSEP Gutted- What's Next?

Interagency Agreements Impacting Special Education Programs

The Questions Headlines Can’t Answer

- What changes?
- What doesn’t?
- Who coordinates?
- How are relationships maintained?
- Where does technical assistance live?
- How is accountability preserved?
- How does this affect states?
- How does this affect Emma?

Leadership Lens:
Ask what must be preserved before deciding what should change.

Impact on a State Level

Legal obligations remain, but infrastructure supporting implementation may become less coherent, less education-specific, and more burdensome for states and districts.

Increased Burden on State Departments

Potential state-level impacts include:

- Increased demand for state level guidance on interpreting IDEA.
- Greater pressure on states to resolve questions previously addressed through OSEP guidance.
- More responsibility for ensuring consistency across districts.
- Increased burden related to monitoring, corrective action, fiscal oversight, and dispute prevention.
- Potential delays in receiving federal clarification on emerging issues.

Greater Risk of Inconsistent Implementation

Potential impacts include:

- More variation in evaluation practices.
- More variation in service delivery models.
- More variation in discipline protections.
- More variation in parent communication and procedural safeguards.
- More local interpretation of federal requirements.

This could increase inequities for students and families based on where they live.

Special Education Seen Less as Education

Potential impacts include:

- Less emphasis on instruction, curriculum access, LRE, and school-based outcomes.
- More confusion between medical need and educational need.
- Weaker alignment between special education policy and general education accountability.
- Less integration with teacher preparation, school improvement, and instructional practice.

For states, this matters because special education is not a separate service system; it is part of public education.

Disrupted Technical Assistance

Potential impacts include:

- Reduced access to national technical assistance.
- Disruption to personnel preparation pipelines.
- Fewer resources for special education administrators.
- Less support for evidence-based practices.
- Greater burden on state & regional systems, professional organizations, and local cooperatives to develop tools independently.

This could be especially significant at a time when local districts are already facing special education teacher shortages, SISP shortages, increased behavioral needs, and rising costs.

Greater Risk of Inconsistent Implementation

Potential impacts include:

- Delays or confusion in grant administration.
- Shifts in federal fiscal interpretation.
- Increased uncertainty around maintenance of effort and fiscal compliance.
- More state responsibility for subrecipient monitoring.
- Greater risk of inconsistent fiscal practices across districts.

Local districts already manage complex special education finance systems. Any disruption in federal fiscal guidance could create additional administrative burden and risk.

Rural Districts May Be More Highly Impacted

Potential impacts include:

- Increased reliance on cooperatives and regional special education leaders.
- Greater need for shared technical assistance.
- More pressure on special education directors serving multiple districts.
- Increased need for common templates, training, and legal interpretation.
- Greater risk that smaller districts fall behind larger systems in adapting to federal changes.

Impact on Parent and Community Trust

Potential impacts include:

- More questions from parents about whether rights have changed.
- Increased anxiety about protections, services, and complaint options.
- More local disputes if families perceive weakened oversight.
- Increased need for districts to communicate clearly that IDEA obligations remain in place.

Districts should be prepared to reassure families that IEP services, procedural safeguards, child find, evaluations, LRE, and due process protections remain legally required.

This brings us back to Emma.

Leadership Lens:
Families judge systems by outcomes, not organizational charts.



As Leaders We Need To…

- Communicate
- Monitor
- Collaborate
- Advocate

Staying connected and sharing what you are experiencing is critical to shape what happens next. Share your stories here.

Emma

Everything seems effortless.





This brings us back to the baton. The baton reaches Emma’s hand. Not literally passed to her. Rather the final runner crosses the finish line.

The promise has been kept.

Every handoff matters. Because every student matters.

Questions?

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