

# SB-9

To provide services for special needs students after they age out of the program at the age of 21 and extending that age to 23.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION BOYS NATION

Mr. Cummings of Michigan introduced the following bill;

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## A BILL

To provide services for special needs students after they age out of the program at the age of 21 and extending that age to 23.

*Be it enacted by The American Legion Boys Nation Senate assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Special needs students moving forward ACT".

### SECTION 1: THE SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS MOVING FORWARD ACT

Access to quality education helps students thrive. Many students are faced with learning disabilities, and the challenge brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic has hindered the educational development of students with learning disabilities.

The Coronavirus pandemic was a challenging time for all Americans. While many students grappled with the issues around internet connectivity, students with learning disabilities were faced with even greater challenges, the greatest being struggling with a completely-new learning environment, a

computer.

The curriculum of a special education class is not one that translates well onto the computer screen. A massive part of special education learning is through interaction, and with schools forced entirely online in many areas, this interaction was limited, if not omitted from a students' daily life.

In order to combat the educational fallout of the pandemic, I propose a temporary system for the special needs population of the United States that will help them succeed in an increasingly-expanding workforce.

As a matter of fact, New Jersey is currently in the process of extending their special needs program on a statewide level, which called for only \$11.5 million in extra funding. It's time to move this program to a federal level by using state and federal COVID relief money as well as excess educational funding.

## **SECTION 2: CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

During COVID-19, it can easily be argued that some students, if not all, lost valuable learning time. However, as stated before, the very hands-on curriculum of a special education course accentuates the loss of time and face-to-face interaction for special needs students. Therefore, the following should be enacted:

(1) In order to recoup the lost year(s), those in special education courses in the high school classes of 2021-2024 shall receive an optional opt-in extra year of schooling in order to ensure they are ready for their future life in the workforce.

(a) This extra year will give students the unique and often times necessary opportunity to touch on any life skills and job coaching for opportunities that they will receive in the future.

(2) To accommodate the potential rise in special education students for the following 3 years of school, funding will be appropriated from grants from the Department of Education with stipulation for funding such a program.

(3) Schools will nonetheless be encouraged to utilize unused coronavirus pandemic funds granted to support this program in relation to class sizes, resources, etc. in any manner that they deem fit.

### **SECTION 3: CONCLUSION**

Seeing that special education courses are very hands-on and interactive, the online learning environment fostered by the Coronavirus pandemic has alienated those with special educational needs.

One state has moved towards a similar goal, and with the passage of this bill, the rest of the Union can move with them in solidarity.

These students deserve help and a fair shot at what follows after high school, and the federal and state governments, and eventually the school systems themselves, should be doing as much as they are permitted to do in order to see all of their students succeed.