

Mr. Speaker, my goal in Congress has been the promotion of livable communities. A community that is safe, healthy and economically secure must view educating our children as a priority. The well-being of our families depends upon the health of our schools.

In the 94th Congress, we mandated--appropriately--that there would be special education access for children with severe learning disabilities. Along with that mandate came a promise that the federal government would pay 40 percent of the cost. This too was appropriate, for these children are the most difficult and expensive to educate. Unfortunately, the federal government has not met this important commitment. Funding has fallen as low as 9 percent, and currently, we fund only 12.6 percent of the average per pupil expenditure to assist children with disabilities. As a result, the financial burden has fallen on local districts.

I am proud to support H.R. 4055, the IDEA Full Funding Act, which addresses the critical issue of assistance for the children whose needs are the greatest. This bill authorizes increases of \$2 billion a year to meet the federal commitment of 40 percent by the year 2010. I have cosponsored similar legislation because programs such as IDEA offer the chance to improve the lives of more disabled people than ever before.

Livable communities are for all of us, not just a select few. The federal government should lead by example in offering the best possible education to our nation's disabled children.