FALLING OFF THE FISCAL CLIFF?

RACE, OPPORTUNITY AND SEQUESTRATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a country, we long ago decided to feed the hungry, help the homeless, ensure our elderly have heat in winter and make sure every child gets a fair chance, by supporting public schools and programs for disabled and poor children. We have helped millions of children and families, White, Black, Latino, Asian and Native American, over the years through programs that work. We now face a crossroads come January 2013. Will we continue to invest in the education, housing and nutrition of Americans hit hard by the recession or begin to cut vital investments in Americans?

This is no time to stop investing in our future. Recent studies show that increases in education and business formation among Black and Latino families, for example, will increase their buying power to a total of $2.7 trillion by 2015 and build the backbone of the middle-class.¹ We must create opportunities for all who need them, including Black and Latino Americans.

Thanks to the fiscal fiasco known as “sequestration” created by Congress’ debt-reduction agreement reached last year, if Congress does not act, Americans will be looking at $54.7 billion in cuts to programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, Homeless Assistance Grants, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and public education funding for children with learning disabilities and other special needs and those living in poverty covered by Special Education (IDEA) grants and Title I grants. These cuts will hurt millions of Americans, but have a particularly devastating impact on people of color.

This report examines the ten marquee programs that invest in opportunities for Americans struggling to make it to the middle class. In seven of the ten programs the absolute number of Black and Latino Americans facing cuts is higher than that for White Americans. It finds:

- Nearly half a million Black and Latino women, infants and children would lose WIC services.
- About 115,000 Black and Latino individuals would lose access to housing vouchers and 90,000 may lose housing assistance, with some possible overlap.
- Nearly 850,000 Black and Latino Americans would lose help heating and cooling their homes.
- Over 60,000 Black and Latino children would lose Head Start early learning education opportunities.
- Over 1 million Black and Latino students would lose Title I funding to their schools.
- Over 330,000 Black and Latino students would lose access to Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants that help them afford college.
- Over 260,000 Black and Latino students would lose access to career and technical education programs.
- Nearly 45,000 homeless children and over 220,000 children with special needs who are Black and Latino would lose population-specific funding to their schools.

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While each of these families may participate in more than one of these programs, we can estimate that about two million infants, youth and adults of color will lose access to crucial programs.\(^2\) This is a moral mistake. It is also an economic mistake. To avert this congressionally-created family crisis, we must choose the smart path forward by repealing the draconian cuts and creating a fair tax policy and cuts to spending that will not harm our future prosperity.

**INTRODUCTION**

All of us need food and shelter to survive, but also to thrive. We also need a good education to get ahead. The two are related, of course. Enough food, and particularly enough nutritious food, is crucial to cognitive development, school performance and long-term health.\(^3\) Like nutritious food, adequate shelter provides not only relief in immediate crises, but also short and long term benefits to physical and mental health.\(^4\)

At a time when ten million people are working at jobs that pay below the poverty line – a little over $18,500 for a family of three\(^5\), and still others are looking for work, we have to continue the food, housing and educational programs our families need.

For families with limited resources, we have a history of creating successful ways to help them. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides food, nutrition and breastfeeding education to low-income women, infants, and children up to age five who are hungry. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, helps low-income families stay warm in the hard winter months and cool in the summer months. For the elderly, in particular, this program can be a matter of life and death. And then there are programs to help kids learn. The Special Education Grants deriving from the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) pools public dollars to give children with learning disabilities a trained reading tutor, or a resource room teacher or occupational therapist. One in five Americans has a learning disability and one million children between the ages of 6 and 21 receive some educational support for learning disabilities.\(^6\) We help students from low-income families, too. Through Title I, a federal program that gives school districts that want them the additional funds to use as they see fit to support schools with high numbers of students living in poverty, schools can hire teachers, buy computers or science equipment or train teachers. These are some of the life supports about to be reduced by sequestration.

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\(^2\) We derive this low-end estimate by adding together programs that are not likely to overlap in clients: Head Start women, infants and children (450,000), Title I students (1,000,000) and students receiving FSEOG (330,000).


**Family Well-Being At the Brink**

*The Scope of Cuts in Adequate Food and Shelter*

Four key programs under the threat of sequestration support family well-being: the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), rental assistance in the form of Tenant-Based Vouchers, Homeless Assistance Grants, and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). These programs help families access enough nutrition and adequate shelter to not only survive but thrive.

Overall, the cuts to programs that support family well-being are potentially devastating to people of color:

- Nearly half a million Black and Latino women, infants, and children would lose WIC services.
- About 115,000 and 90,000 Black and Latino individuals would lose access to housing vouchers and housing assistance, respectively.
- Nearly 850,000 Black and Latino individuals would lose crucial home energy assistance.
- All communities are affected by cuts in services that support family well-being, but in all four of these programs a higher absolute number of Black and Latino people are affected by cuts than White people.

As Figure 1 below shows, in all four of programs, not only are Black and Latino families disproportionately represented and therefore affected by cuts, but the differences are so high that a higher absolute number of people of color are being cut than White people. WIC cuts would affect over 160,000 more people of color than White people and each of the housing programs would affect between 35,000 and 90,000 more people of color than White people.

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**Story 1: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

“You know I feel like I want to try to do for myself but when you can’t you can’t. If the energy assistance wasn’t there I really honestly can say I don’t know what we would’ve done. I really do not know.

My husband and I both are retired ... we both have high blood pressure and it just takes a toll. I can’t express what goes through mind. What do we do, do we try to sell out, and maybe go to some place where the heat’s included? But I am just thankful that we don’t have to uproot and leave.

The energy program helped me in so many ways, more than I can say. They really did. If it weren’t for them, I don’t think I would’ve made it!” (Donna Richardson, Faces of LIHEAP)
The proposed sequestration would slash the budgets of these programs, barring millions of people from necessary assistance (see Table 1 in the Appendix for an overview). According to the OMB’s report on August of this year, WIC’s total budget of $6.6 billion would be cut by 8.2%, or $543 million.\(^7\) Given that the program served nearly nine million women, infants and children in 2011, an 8.2% cut would prevent an estimated 735,000 people from accessing needed food, training and healthcare referrals. WIC reports that over 60% of these women and children are Black and Latino, totaling nearly half a million cut from the program.\(^8\) Since Black and Latino families make up only 30% of the population, sequestration’s cuts are affecting them at highly disproportional rates.\(^9\)

Sequestration would also cut funds to programs that help families find and retain adequate shelter. The budget for two housing programs under threat of sequestration, Tenant-Based Vouchers and Homeless Assistance grants, is over $20 billion. An 8.2% cut on the sequesterable portion of this amount would deprive these programs of nearly $1.7 billion and take away crucial housing assistance for an estimated 185,000 and 145,000 individuals respectively.\(^10\) Adequate shelter requires not just a physical dwelling but also safe heating and cooling. Sequestration would cut funding to LIHEAP by $285 million, taking away life-saving utility payment assistance from at least 1.7 million individuals.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Unfortunately WIC does not disaggregate race by ethnicity, and therefore it is impossible to provide a count of non-Latino White women, infants and children receiving services.


As with WIC, people of color are disproportionately affected by these cuts in shelter-related programs. Relying on the demographics of the U.S. homeless population, we estimate that over 60% of those enrolled in Tenant-Based Vouchers and the Homeless Assistance Grants are Black and Latino. Using U.S. Census poverty demographics, we estimate that nearly half of those enrolled in LIHEAP are Black and Latino. Sequestration would therefore cut assistance to over 115,000 and over 90,000 Black and Latino individuals in the two respective housing programs, and nearly 845,000 Black and Latino individuals in the home energy assistance program.

The Impact of Cuts in Adequate Food and Shelter

Hurting a family's well-being now hurts that family's ability to contribute in the future. Decades of scientific research on the WIC program shows that providing supplemental nutrition, nutrition education and referrals to health care and social services results in a decrease in low birth weight, premature births, childhood anemia and an increase in access to needed health care. These immediate results lead to significant short- and long-term outcomes, including a decline in disability, diabetes and asthma and an increase in cognitive development. Not only do these improvements lead to substantial costs savings in the health care system—a reported $3.13 saved for every dollar spent—they allow all children to more fully participate in our economy and civil society down the road by becoming the next generation of wage earners, consumers and innovators.

Children and their families not only need adequate nutrition and access to services, they also need safe and stable places to live. Research shows the physical and mental health benefits of stable safe housing are numerous and intertwined. Support that allows families to choose permanent, affordable housing lets families shift their spending from housing costs to other necessities such as food, clothing and health care. Additional support for the cost of heating and cooling the home lets families make this shift without resorting to unsafe temperatures that threaten the health of elderly and young family members. This burden of housing costs has been shown to be particularly hard on low-income renters and renters of color. In addition to lowering housing costs, housing support can lead to greater residential stability and better housing options. Greater stability can reduce stress and related negative health outcomes for both children and adults, including developmental delays and depression. Safe housing can directly affect health outcomes by limiting exposure to neurotoxins, allergens and other health dangers.

Cutting key services that support families' physical and mental health threatens their ability participate fully in our economy and civil society. Given that many of these programs report being underenrolled with respect to need,\(^{16}\) and that they disproportionately support the most vulnerable demographic – low-income families of color - we should focus our attention on *increasing* rather than *decreasing* investment in order to build a more inclusive, and thereby more economically successful, society.

**EDUCATION AT THE BRINK**

*The Scope of Cuts in Education Programs to Assist Learning, Career Preparation and Special Populations*

When we invest in our children's education from early childhood through college, and help those later in life pursue sustainable and fulfilling careers, we enable our communities to participate in and benefit from our economy. We all do better if we have the chance to participate in early learning activities, attend well-funded schools and enroll in the best post-secondary and adult educational opportunities available.

Some of our children require extra assistance, including those without permanent housing and those with special needs. Without this assistance, they are effectively barred from the free, quality education that is a cornerstone of equal opportunity.

Six key programs under the threat of sequestration support education: Head Start, Title I, Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Career and Technical Education (CTE) Grants, Education to Homeless Children and Youth Grants, and Special Education (IDEA) Grants. Together these programs provide learners of varied ages and needs the services they need to contribute to our economy and, in turn, raise the economic outcomes of the United States. Cuts will harm our nation's children of color as they become the majority of our young people.

Overall, the cuts to programs that support education for children, youth and adults are potentially devastating to people of color:

- Over 60,000 Black and Latino children would lose Head Start early learning programming.
- Over a million Black and Latino students would lose Title I funding to their schools.
- Over 330,000 Black and Latino students would lose access to Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants that help them afford college.
- Over 260,000 Black and Latino students would lose access to career and technical education programs.
- Nearly 45,000 homeless children and over 220,000 children with special needs who are Black and Latino would lose population-specific funding to their schools.
- All communities are affected by cuts in educational funding, but in three of these programs a higher *absolute number* of Black and Latino children are affected by cuts than White children.

\(^{16}\) Colman et al., 2012
As Figure 2 below shows, similar to the family well-being programs, the highly disproportionate impact on children of color for Head Start, Title I and Education for Homeless Children and Youth means that a higher absolute number of children of color would be affected than Whites. Head Start cuts would affect at least 29,000 more children of color than White children while cuts to Title I would affect over 400,000 more children of color than White children. Cuts to Education for Homeless Children and Youth would affect 19,500 more children of color than White children.

The proposed sequestration would take money from these key programs (see Table 2 in the Appendix for an overview). Head Start’s total budget of $8.1 billion would be cut by 8.2%, or $664 million. Given that the program served over 1.1 million children in 2012, an 8.2% cut would diminish enrollment by over 90,000 children.17 Head Start reports that two-thirds of these children are Black and Latino, totaling over 60,000 barred from enrollment.18 Similar to the findings for cuts to family well-being, since Black and Latino families make up only 30% of the US population overall, sequestration’s cuts are affecting the early education opportunities of families of color at highly disproportional rates.

Grants to other educational programs face losses at a much grander scale in terms of numbers cut. Funding for Title I, FSEOG and CTE serve 21 million, 17 million and 12 million students respectively. In total, cuts to these grants would affect over four million students in elementary through adult education. Title I, similar to the programs supporting family well-being, would face cuts that are disproportionate

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18 “Head Start Program Fact Sheet Fiscal Year 2010.” Head Start: An Office of the Administration for Children and Families: Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC). Since Head Start does not disaggregate race by ethnicity, our numbers for white children are upper-end estimates calculated by subtracting the numbers of Black and Hispanic children from the total number of children.
to children of color. Nearly 60% of students served by Title I funding, totaling over a million students, are students of color. Students of color are underrepresented in FSEOG and CTE funding, but due to the sheer size of the programs, sequestration would still cut programming to nearly 600,000 Black and Latino students.

Programs serving special populations would also see sizable cuts. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program is currently funded at a level of $65 million and serves over 880,000 young people. Sequestration would cut services for over 70,000 children and youth, which given the demographics of the homeless population would mean a loss of services for nearly 45,000 Black and Latino children and youth. Special Education IDEA grants would be cut by $980 million and over half a million students. In both of these programs serving special populations, children of color are overrepresented.

The Impact of Cuts in Education

Slashing funding for education now hurts all families’ ability to contribute in the future. Early education has been shown to have short- and long-term educational and economic benefits. Early education supports both school-readiness in the short-term and likelihood of graduation later on. It also has been shown to lead to higher earnings, a higher likelihood of employment, and a decrease in criminal imprisonment. Early education also provides economic benefits to the nation as a whole, by reducing education and criminal justice costs while raising income-tax revenues. Studies show these benefits raise the overall gross domestic product of the U.S. in a long-term boost of economic growth. Funding for elementary, secondary and post-secondary education furthers this outcome by providing necessary supports and training along the way.

Cutting key funding to education threatens the ability of all individuals to fully contribute to our economy and civil society. While these cuts may decrease costs in the short term, they raise costs and decrease revenue in the long term. Instead of cutting these key supports, especially those that disproportionately support low-income families of color, we should increase investment in order to build a more economically competitive country.

24 NEA, 2012.
SPOTLIGHT ON STATES

Sequestration, while a national issue, has specific outcomes for states. Some state populations rely more heavily on some types of assistance over others. Bringing these differences to light helps us to nuance the challenges communities of color may face under the proposed cuts.

Nutrition and Accessible Shelter in California

Under budget sequestration, California is facing deep cuts in programs that address the need for food and shelter. In 2010, California had the second highest enrollment in WIC, at an estimated 42 enrolled women, infants and children per 1000 population. Over three-quarters of these funds are going to infants and children. California is also a top recipient of homeless assistance, serving an estimated 5 in 1000 individuals in Homeless Assistance programs and 6 in 1000 students in Education for Homeless Children and Youth programs.

California’s needs with respect to food security and homelessness are at an all-time high. According to the USDA, in 2009 over 14% of Californian’s were food insecure. According to a statewide survey, nearly half (47.5%) of low-income households with children could not afford sufficient food for their families at least once during the year. Among the Spanish-speaking population, this food insecure percentage rose to 50.7%. California also has the highest homeless population in the country, and it is increasing in spite of a decreasing trend nationwide. As with food security, there is racial disparity in homelessness. In San Diego and San Francisco, the Black population is about 6% but the Black homeless population is 33%. Cutting funds to food and shelter assistance in California would therefore disproportionately impact Black and Latino Californians.

Nutrition and Education in Mississippi

Mississippi is also facing a difficult landscape of cuts. Similar to California, it has the fourth highest enrollment in WIC, at an estimated 39 enrolled women, infants and children per 1000 population. But Mississippi ranks highest in percentage of this funding going to infants and children rather than adults, at 80%. Mississippi is also a top recipient of educational funding relative to its total population. It has the second highest Head Start enrollment, third highest Title I funding and highest number of CTE schools per capita.

In Mississippi, WIC funding is primarily going to black infants and children. Over 57% of WIC participants in Mississippi are black and over 54,000 are infants and children. Before the recession, over 17% of

Mississippians were food insecure. Among those households earning below the poverty level, almost half (45.1% or 104,000) were food insecure. Food insecurity varied by race. While 9.9% of White Mississippians experienced food insecurity, nearly one out of three Black households was food insecure. Mississippi is also lagging in educational outcomes. Mississippi has the second lowest teacher salaries in the nation, below average student-per-pupil ratio, and below average scores in math, reading and science. Educational disparities mean that reading and math proficiency scores were higher for White students than for Black students. Cutting funds to food and education would have a disproportionate impact on Black Mississippians.

Safe Shelter in Michigan, New York and Ohio

Michigan, New York and Ohio would be significantly impacted by cuts in LIHEAP as three of the states with the highest number of households served per capita. Together, LIHEAP serves nearly 6.7 million people in these three states. Cuts would therefore impact over 546,000 people, denying much needed heating assistance in states with some of the coldest average winter temperatures in the nation. The Census estimates 13%, 10% and 13% of white people in Michigan, New York and Ohio are earning incomes below the poverty line. People of color in those states are comparatively worse off. In Michigan, 36% of Black and 30% of Latino individuals are earning incomes below the poverty line. For New York, people of color are also disproportionate earning below the poverty line at 24% and 27% for Black and Latino individuals respectively. And in Ohio, 35% and 30% of Black and Latino individuals are earning incomes below the poverty line. Since LIHEAP eligibility is based partially on incomes, Black and Latino individuals would be disproportionately affected by cuts in Michigan, New York and Ohio.

CONCLUSION

The automatic budget cuts that come in January 2013 are a scary prospect for all of us. They will produce austerity and not only harm our economy, they will cause real pain to millions of people at a time when our country is beginning to recover from a recession. This landscape is even more severe for people of color, who face cuts in higher absolute numbers than White people from key programs that invest in family well-being and education. By disproportionately affecting Black and Latino families - the youngest and fastest growing population in the country - these cuts stifle the economic potential of our country. By slashing investment in just those programs that help all of us stay healthy and safe and improve our human capital, we lose the opportunity to build a stable middle class now and develop the next generation of wage earners, consumers and innovators.

41 NOAA, “Average Mean Temperature Index by Month”. http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/data/usclimate/tmp.state.19712000.climo
Given the benefits of investing in communities of color through specific federal programs, it is clear that Congress should act to stop sequestration. Faced with the task of debt reduction, Congress has clear choices in front of them in regards to revenue generation. Recent studies show that choosing to extend tax cuts on the wealthy will reduce revenue and thereby exacerbate the pressure to cut vital programs. This choice will also slow the recovery by benefitting wealthier households who tend to save rather than spend. Instead, Congress can raise new revenue by letting tax cuts on the wealthy expire and closing tax loop holes, avoiding the dire misstep of slashing investments in our nation’s most precious resource: its people.

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## APPENDIX

*Table 1: Programs Investing in Family Well-Being that are Facing Cuts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Dollars Cut (million $)</th>
<th>Individuals Cut (thousands)</th>
<th>White Individuals Cut (thousands)</th>
<th>Black &amp; Latino Individuals Cut (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)</td>
<td>Dept. of Agriculture (USDA)</td>
<td>Provides nutritious food, nutrition education and referrals to health care and social service providers for pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children. WIC has been extensively cited as effective and is widely used. More than half of all U.S. infants and a quarter of all U.S. children ages one to five receive WIC benefits. 43</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>735,241</td>
<td>286,744</td>
<td>450,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant-Based Vouchers</td>
<td>Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)</td>
<td>Lessens the rental burden on families by providing them with partial or total rent relief, depending on family income and the gross rent of the unit. These vouchers increase the privately-owned housing options available to families, leading to a higher likelihood of</td>
<td>1530</td>
<td>186,915</td>
<td>65,420</td>
<td>115,887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Devaney 2007
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)</th>
<th>Helps individuals and families find and remain in permanent housing by providing of a variety of supportive social services through Continuum of Care agencies.</th>
<th>156</th>
<th>145,906</th>
<th>51,067</th>
<th>90,462</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)</td>
<td>Helps families pay for heating and cooling their homes. The program targets households with particularly vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, disabled or very young, as well as low-income households who spend the largest proportions of their income on home energy expenses.</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1,734,303</td>
<td>754,675</td>
<td>844,183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Programs Investing in Education that are Facing Cuts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Dollars Cut (millions)</th>
<th>Individuals Cut (thousands)</th>
<th>White Individuals Cut (thousands)</th>
<th>Black &amp; Latino Individuals Cut (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start Program</td>
<td>Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS)</td>
<td>Builds school readiness for children ages birth to five by providing comprehensive services that promote their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Similar to WIC, Head Start has been widely cited for its ability to impact literacy, cognition, and physical and mental health.</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>92,498</td>
<td>31,449</td>
<td>61,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>Dept. of Education</td>
<td>Provides funding to states to distribute among elementary and secondary schools with high percentages of low-income families.</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>1,761,000</td>
<td>616,350</td>
<td>1,021,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)</td>
<td>Dept. of Education</td>
<td>Provide assistance to low-income families to relieve the cost of post-secondary education.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1,389,900</td>
<td>875,637</td>
<td>333,576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grants</th>
<th>Dept. of Education</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Total Funding</th>
<th>Allocated</th>
<th>Disallowed</th>
<th>Encumbered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career and Technical Education (CTE) Grants</td>
<td>Dept. of Education</td>
<td>Provides funding to states to distribute among secondary and post-secondary career-readiness programs.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>993,200</td>
<td>632,668</td>
<td>260,218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education to Homeless Children and Youth Grants</td>
<td>Dept. of Education</td>
<td>Provides funding to states to make sure that homeless children can enroll, attend and succeed at school. Funding goes to comprehensive services that address issues faced by this population, including transportation needs, immunization and residency requirements, lack of birth certificates and school records, and guardianship issues.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>72,473</td>
<td>25,366</td>
<td>44,933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education (IDEA) Grants</td>
<td>Dept. of Education</td>
<td>Allots funding to states to provide special education and related services to children with disabilities. These funds go to pay special education teachers, speech therapists and psychologists as well as a variety of other supports including technology in the classroom.</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>537,500</td>
<td>282,833</td>
<td>220,429</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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The Center for Social Inclusion works to unite public policy research and grassroots advocacy to transform structural inequity and exclusion into structural fairness and inclusion.

We work with community groups and national organizations to develop policy ideas, foster effective leadership, and develop communications tools for an opportunity-rich world in which we all will thrive.

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