

# VIRGINIA COALITION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

15 Interstate Corporate Center, Suite 100  
Norfolk, Virginia 23502

January 17, 2001

**Judith Heumann**, Assistant Secretary

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Ave. SW

Washington, D.C. 20202

Re: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
Federal Monitoring of the Commonwealth of Virginia

Dear Ms. Heumann:

The Virginia Coalition for Students with Disabilities (Coalition) represents organizations and individuals who work together to improve educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The Coalition has recently completed an independent review concerning the Virginia Department of Education's general supervision of IDEA implementation by Virginia's local educational agencies. The Coalition's report is intended to provide an independent perspective to assist OSEP with the federal monitoring of Virginia during 2000-2001.

The Coalition is pleased to submit our report entitled "***A Report on the Virginia Department of Education --- Monitoring, Supervision, and IDEA Compliance***", dated January 17, 2001 (*VCSD Report*). The authors have drawn upon a variety of sources to develop the *VCSD Report*. We have reviewed a number of reports regarding Virginia's role in ensuring FAPE is provided to all children with disabilities. The *VCSD Report* represents a compilation of personal experiences, advocates' experiences, reviews of reports and surveys by various agencies, and active involvement with personnel within the Virginia Department of Education.

The Coalition believes that the *VCSD Report* demonstrates that many problems uncovered in OSEP's 1995 monitoring of Virginia have not been corrected. It is hoped that the federal on-site monitoring team visiting Virginia in 2001 will be able to use the information provided and discern how to best to address these problems. Areas of particular concern to parents of children with disabilities are Virginia's corrective action system, the lack of extended school year services to children in need, and the Department's level of commitment to ensure identified weaknesses are corrected.

The following members of the Virginia Coalition have acted as principal draftsmen of the *VCSD Report*: Maureen Hollowell, Malcolm B. Higgins, II, Esquire, P. Toby Brown, Vickie Messick, Carl Brakman, and Denise Swanson. Members of the Coalition would be pleased to meet with you or the on-site monitoring team should you deem that beneficial.

Very truly yours,

Maureen Hollowell

On behalf of the Virginia Coalition  
for Students with Disabilities

Enclosures

cc: Jo Lynne DeMary, Superintendent - Virginia Department of Education  
Kirk Schroder, President - Virginia Board of Education