Dear Parent, Guardian, Grandparent or Caregiver,

Family members are THE most important influence in the life of a child. Your direct care and support are critical in helping a child grow and develop. Your influence is also critical in ensuring your local school, your state and even your country are providing adequate access and resources for the education of your child.

As a nation we have come a long way in providing education for children who are deaf/hard of hearing, visually impaired/blind or deafblind. There is much to be proud of and there are many success stories. **Unfortunately, there continue to be a number of unresolved problems that likely affect a child that you care about**.

No one expects perfection but concerned professionals and many parents of children with one or a combination of sensory deficits, report a pattern of unmet needs that can and do occur in most states. If a child has significant physical or intellectual disability, it is not uncommon for the sensory impairment (hearing or vision loss) to be underreported and subsequently unaddressed. The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) does allow for secondary disabilities to be counted but that does not always happen. Without an accurate count of students who have difficulty learning because of sensory loss, it is impossible to have a true picture of how many teachers and other specialists are needed in the education system. We need IDEA to be greatly strengthened. If we do not act, we are accepting that many students will continue to be underserved.

The coalition of organizations believe that the issues are different from state to state, but there needs to be better accountability and planning in every state. The passage of this legislation will require states to review needs every two years and develop plans to meet unmet needs. It is our belief that parents should definitely be engaged and participate in state planning.

We hope the coalition of organizations will be a strong voice for your children, but without parents also leading the way, the Alice Cogswell-Anne Sullivan Macy Act may stay in limbo forever. This crucial legislation will only pass with parents communicating honest concerns. Tell your stories of success, but please do not hold back in explaining the problems you have witnessed to your Senator or Congressman.

Your child deserves a equal playing field based on evidence based, best practices. Their ability to learn and grow into productive adults depends on a system that works.

Thank you for taking time to consider advocating for your child and others. If you have any questions about the specifics of the proposed legislation, please complete the contact form on the website cogswellmacyact.org.