Executive Summary: Resolution Urging Congress to Fulfill Its Promise to Fund 40 Percent of IDEA Costs

This resolution formally calls on the United States Congress to honor its original commitment under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to fund 40 percent of special education costs. It directs district leadership to advocate for necessary federal funding to relieve local budget pressures and protect educational services for all students.

Key Context & Background

- Federal Funding Shortfall: When IDEA was enacted in 1975, Congress pledged to fund 40% of special education costs. Currently, federal funding covers only about 10%.
- Growing Need: The number of students served under IDEA nationwide has grown from 3.7 million in 1975 to 8.3 million today.
- Impact on Illinois & Local Budgets: Illinois school districts face an annual special education funding deficit exceeding $600 million. Because local districts are legally mandated to fulfill special education requirements regardless of federal shortfalls, general education funds must be diverted to cover the gap.
- Local Consequences: The funding shortfall strains local property tax reliance, increases budget instability, and limits funding for essential services such as mental health supports and general education staffing.

Key Action Items Directed by the Resolution

By adopting this resolution, the Meridian CUSD 223 School Board urges Congress to:

1. Meet the 40% Commitment: Establish a multi-year plan to reach full 40% funding for IDEA.
2. Increase Annual Appropriations: Support meaningful annual funding increases that progressively narrow the deficit.
3. Protect Funding: Protect IDEA funds from across-the-board spending cuts.
4. Reaffirm Federal Duty: Reaffirm federal responsibility for funding mandated special education services.

Next Steps

Upon adoption, the Board President and Superintendent are instructed to send copies of the adopted resolution to:

- Illinois Congressional Delegates
- Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB)
- Illinois State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Tony Sanders
- Local State Legislators

Recommendation

I recommend the Board of Education consider the approval of the resolution urging Congress to fully fund IDEA.