Washington (March 17, 2021) - Senators Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), and Representatives Matt Cartwright (PA-08) and David McKinley (WV-01) today reintroduced bipartisan legislation that will strengthen the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure that visual and hearing-impaired students receive the best education possible. The Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act would improve services and educational opportunities for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind. The legislation will also enhance reporting and evaluation measures for special education in each state, increase training for teachers and other special education professionals, and reaffirm the Department of Education's mission and responsibility to ensure an accessible and quality education for all students.

This bill is named after Alice Cogswell, the first deaf student that was formally educated in the United States, and Anne Sullivan Macy, Helen Keller's famous teacher.

"This pandemic has made it crystal clear how challenging and vital it is to ensure that our students receive a quality education to help them develop, grow, and thrive. And few have faced more challenges continuing their learning through this crisis than our deaf, blind, and deaf-blind students,"

said Senator Markey. "Our education agenda needs to reflect the nation's shared belief that a quality education is a fundamental right for every student. The Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act will improve access to personalized services and effective education for deaf, blind, and deaf-blind students across the nation and ensure that each is able to meet their fullest potential."

"Every child deserves access to a quality education, and students who are deaf or blind are no different," said Senator Capito. "This legislation would bring much-needed improvements to ensure students who are visually or hearing impaired have access to the specialized educational resources necessary for learning and progress. I'm proud to work with Senator Markey in delivering personalized care to help thousands of students succeed."

"Thousands of students are learning with hearing or vision disabilities across the nation, and it's critical that they have the tools they need to excel in the classroom. I'm proud to work alongside Democrats and Republicans in the House and the Senate on legislation to provide the equipment, services and training to ensure all students have the chance to reach their full potential," said Representative Cartwright.

"No student should feel academically sidelined due to a visual or hearing impairment. As someone who is hearing impaired, I understand how crucial it is to recognize and acknowledge the needs of the people with disabilities,"

said Representative McKinley. "This bipartisan legislation prioritizes supportive services to students who need them, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn, grow, and reach their full potential."

Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Mike Braun (R-Ind.) are also co-sponsors of the legislation in the Senate.

A copy of the legislation can be found HERE

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Specifically, the Cogswell-Macy Act would:

\*             Require states to identify and evaluate children who are visually

and hearing impaired so that appropriate services can be delivered to each student, and report instances when they fall short

\*             Help parents and educators stay informed and up-to-date through

written policy guidance released regularly from the Department of Education

\*             Encourage states to plan for and commit to specialized instruction

for all deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind students, provided by trained personnel

\*             Establish the Anne Sullivan Macy Center of Vision Loss and

Educational Excellence within the Department of Education to function as a national resource to better support students with visual disabilities

"Despite years of implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), deaf and hard of hearing students do not achieve outcomes commensurate with their abilities. All too often, students lack the specialized supports, services, and environments they need. The Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act will clarify what states, districts, and schools need to do to close these gaps. We are thrilled to see the bill reintroduced and are committed to seeing it move forward." - Dr. David Geeslin, President, Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD)

"Every child can learn and this critical legislation will ensure that every child who is blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired, has greater access to resources and education. We proudly join Senator Markey as a champion of the Cogswell-Macy Act and ensuring accountability, personalized services and a quality education for all students with sensory disabilities." - Ed Bosso, President of Educational Programs and Superintendent of Perkins School for the Blind

"The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) thanks Senators Markey, Capito, Warren, and Braun for introducing the Cogswell Macy Act in this Congress.

Since its founding in 1880, the NAD has constantly advocated for quality education on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing students. This Act, if passed, would provide much needed and clearer guidance to schools and families on how to best educate deaf and hard of hearing children. Too many deaf and hard of hearing students are left behind every day based on false assumptions and misunderstandings of their abilities and capabilities. The Cogswell Macy Act is needed to ensure a more appropriate public education for all deaf and hard of hearing children." - Howard Rosenblum, CEO, National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

"It's often wryly observed among our teacher members that of course Annie Sullivan was a miracle worker; she only had a caseload of one. But that's why we've named our bill after Helen Keller's hard working and much loved teacher. Doing right by our kids doesn't take a miracle; it requires a national-, state-, district-, and classroom-level unrelenting commitment to honor each student's God-given individuality, and that's at heart what this bill is all about." - Mark Richert, CEO of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)

"We support the Cogswell-Macy Act because it includes language which calls for appropriately trained personnel to work with children and youth who are deaf-blind, including interveners and teachers of the deaf-blind.

Interveners are a critical component of a Free and Appropriate Public Education for these children because they provide access to the visual and auditory information about people and things in the educational environment that is necessary for learning, interaction and overall development. The language in Cogswell-Macy designates intervener services as a related service under IDEA, and this is critical to improving outcomes for children and youth who are deaf-blind." - The National Intervener & Advocate Association (NIAA)