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Federal Response to Teacher Shortage Impacts on Students with Disabilities

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Chair Garza, Vice Chair Nourse, and Members of the Commission, thank you for inviting me to participate on this panel and for your attention to a topic that has been the focus of my professional career and that I believe is of critical importance.

I am Amanda Levin Mazin, Senior Lecturer and Practicum Coordinator of the Programs in Special Education: Intellectual Disability/Autism at Teachers College, Columbia University. My role as a teacher educator, preparing special education teachers, began 20 years ago. Prior to this work, I was a classroom teacher in Washington Heights, NY, in a self-contained classroom, in a self-contained school for students with complex autism. I am a certified special education teacher in New York and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the Doctoral Level. For the past 20 years, my scholarship and practice has focused on preparing special education teachers in the knowledge and skills needed to increase self-efficacy and decrease teacher burnout. This task has become increasingly more challenging after COVID. A confluence of factors, including devaluing the teaching profession, have led to a decrease in the number of candidates in preparation programs and the number of special education teachers in classrooms. This has significantly impacted access to referral and special education services for students with disabilities.