

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen,
Chairman
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking
Member
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking
Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking
Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related
Agencies
House Appropriations Committee

February 22, 2018

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to increase the 302(b) allocation for the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education (LHHS-Ed) Subcommittee FY 2018 bill by at least its proportional share (\$20 billion) of the additional spending under the recent caps deal. We greatly appreciate that Congress recognized the need for additional spending to make the necessary investments in domestic programs under previous budget caps and we hope that LHHS-Ed will receive enough to make critical increases to education programs, including the flexible block grant under Title IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grant Program under Title IV-A of ESSA supports well-rounded programs, safe and healthy schools, and the effective use of technology and is authorized at \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018 (FY 2018) but only received \$400 million in FY17. This new program is the result of Congress' decision to consolidate more than 20 existing programs, most of which were competitive, into a single formula-funded flexible block grant program that has the potential to benefit millions of students by allowing districts to choose how to spend their dollars to support safe and healthy schools, well-rounded education, and the effective use of technology. The critical education programs meant to be supported by SSAE funds include: 1) safe and healthy students activities, such as providing mental health services to students; 2) increasing student access to STEM, computer science and accelerated learning courses, physical education, the arts, music, foreign languages, and college and career counseling; funds for an effective school library program; and, 3) providing students with access to technology and digital materials and educators with technology professional development opportunities.

We strongly urge Congress to fully fund the SSAE program in FY 2018, as the FY 2017 allocation of only \$400 million is wholly inadequate to provide the flexibility at the local level or to run the program as Congress intended. Funding this program at less than 25% of its authorized level in its first year has already presented serious implementation issues, including the need to allow states to allocate funds to districts competitively, contrary to what is authorized in ESSA. The promise of ESSA to provide local districts with flexibility to make meaningful investments in programs including

computer science, AP, music and the arts, mental health services, and professional development for technology has been severely hindered due to Congress' failure to provide adequate funding for this program in its first year.

Congress must do better by our nation's schools, educators, and most importantly, our students. For these reasons, we strongly urge Congress to provide a proportional share of funding to the LHHS-Ed Subcommittee and to fully fund the SSAE flexible grant program at \$1.6 billion in FY 2018.

Sincerely,