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July 17, 2017

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The Honorable
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House Appropriations
Committee
H-305 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

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
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 114 national education associations and institutions spanning the education continuum from early learning to postgraduate education to adult education and education enhancements, we are writing to voice our concerns regarding the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations bill that the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee reported out on July 13th.

We recognize the difficult budget limitations the Subcommittee endeavored to balance, and commend your leadership in providing funding increases to a handful of programs. However, we also recognize that in order to meet an arbitrary nondefense discretionary level that is well below the already austere level set by sequestration, the bill reduces and, in some cases, even eliminates vital federal education and workforce investments. The resulting bill will harm teaching and learning, jeopardize the financial security of the nation's primary student aid grant program, and pull resources away from vital services outside the classroom and for workforce readiness.

Overall, the bill cuts discretionary resources for the Department of Education by \$4 billion (6 percent) below the comparable FY 2017 level that includes rescissions of previously appropriated Pell grant funding. Even

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excluding those rescissions, the bill cuts education funding by \$2.4 billion (3.5 percent) below the 2017 level. These cuts negatively affect students, teachers, and schools across the country. This bill provides scant modest increases sprinkled across a few programs in the face of steep cuts to many others – leaving many education programs insufficiently funded to fulfill their intended goals and meet student needs.

CEF continues to request that Congress eliminate the sequester-level discretionary caps and to maintain the long-standing principle of parity by matching any increases in the defense caps with equal increases in non-defense caps. We are encouraged that Chairman Cole stated his willingness to renegotiate the bill’s “initial allocation” to be able “to plug holes and enhance national priorities.” In fact, these cuts could be avoided if Congress were to eliminate sequestration caps, allowing investments that are essential to our nation’s security for both nondefense and defense programs.

Educational attainment is inextricably tied to both individual success and the nation’s economic strength. Students and schools are counting on strong federal education investments to ensure equitable access to high quality education from preschool to higher education and career and technical and adult education, and to fill gaps where local and state funding is insufficient or where new needs arise. We strongly urge Congress to repeal the Budget Control Act sequester-level caps and significantly increase the federal education investment in order to maximize opportunities for students and their families, schools, and our nation.

Sincerely,



Jocelyn Bissonnette
President



Sheryl Cohen
Executive Director