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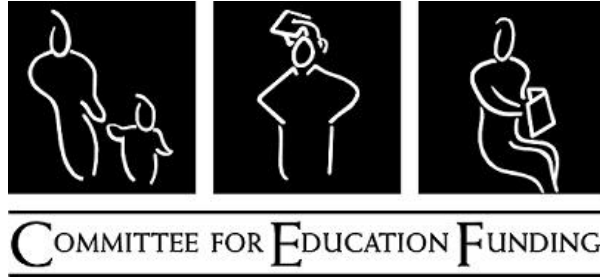
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Joel Packer,
Executive Director
Committee for Education Funding



October 18, 2011

Dear Senator:

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 90 education associations and institutions from preschool to postgraduate education, is writing to express our strong support for S. 1723, The Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act.

This bill would provide \$30 billion to create or save almost 400,000 education jobs for teachers and other school employees, including school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, librarians, paraprofessionals, custodians and other school personnel. Without these funds students will be shortchanged by reductions in school weeks, program eliminations, and unreasonable class sizes.

S. 1723 appropriately responds to the layoff crisis in our schools. Students, schools and colleges are struggling with significant state and local budget cuts that have resulted in large numbers of educator layoffs and major cuts to and elimination of a range of critical education programs.

In the past two years local governments have slashed over 250,000 education jobs, with 24,000 educator jobs lost just last month. Not only do those individuals who are laid off and their families suffer, but these reductions in force are also extremely harmful to local communities and the overall economy.

Unfortunately, the outlook for additional layoffs and program cuts remains grim. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Elementary and high schools are receiving less state funding than last year in at least 37 states, and in at least 30 states school funding now stands below 2008 levels – often far below.” A report from the Center on Education Policy found that “the already grim situation for school funding is expected to worsen in the coming school year with a large majority of all school districts, about 70 percent, experiencing funding cuts in school year 2010-11 and an even greater proportion of districts, about 84 percent, anticipating funding cuts in the upcoming school year.”

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GAO recently reached a similar conclusion when it found that 72 percent of school districts anticipate having less funding in the 2011-12 school year than they did last year.

The American public strongly supports this proposal. According to a CNN/ORC Poll released yesterday, by a more than 3-1 margin (75-24%) the public supports “providing federal money to state governments to allow them to hire teachers and first responders”. Strong support for the proposal was found among all age groups, all income levels, all regions of the country and by party affiliation. A September Gallup poll found the same support, with the public favoring by a margin of 75-25% “providing additional funds to hire teachers, police officers and firefighters”.

This bill is fully paid for by imposing a very small 0.5% income tax surcharge on those with adjusted gross incomes of over \$1 million.

Failure to enact this bill will harm our students and schools as well as our nation’s economic growth and global competitiveness. America succeeds when our students succeed. We urge you to vote for the bill and for cloture.

Sincerely,



Abigail Evans
President



Joel Packer
Executive Director