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February 23, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We are reaching out to you on behalf of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) in support of the federal investments in education that are critical for future economic growth. CEF – the nation’s oldest and largest education coalition – is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that reflects the broad spectrum of the education community. Our more than 100 member organizations represent early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, higher education, and adult and workforce education including students, teachers and faculty, parents, administrators, counselors, other school employees, librarians, school board members, and trustees from both the public and private sectors.

Federal investments in education not only improve access to high quality education and help with the costs of federally mandated services, such as special education, they also are the foundation for a strong economy and a secure future. Investing in education pays dividends for both the students themselves and the economy as a whole. Those with more education earn dramatically more over their lifetime, pay more in taxes, and have higher employment rates. Countries with higher educational achievement have greater economic growth.

For the last several years, education programs have been the targets of deep cuts; Congress has eliminated 50 education programs since 2010. Any additional funding cuts or program eliminations would jeopardize the ability of the federal government to ensure an equitable education for all students and, thus, a strong economy for all Americans.

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Funding for the Department of Education is now below what it was in 2010, excluding the Pell grant program, and the appropriations bills that Congress is considering for fiscal year 2017 cut funding even more deeply. Further cuts to federal education appropriations will only compound the constraints caused by decreases in state and local education budgets; almost half of the states are on track to provide less formula funding this year than they did 10 years ago. In fact, spending on education accounts for just 2 percent of the federal budget even though public schools are struggling to meet the needs of all of their students, costs make college unattainable to many, and graduates are now burdened by \$1.3 trillion of student loan debt.

We recognize that the recent reduction in the federal investment in education is due in part to the tight constraints of the discretionary spending caps. This is why CEF continues to strongly urge the elimination of the austerity-level caps. Even after a bipartisan vote to raise the 2016 and 2017 caps for defense and non-defense discretionary funding by equal amounts – maintaining the concept of parity between defense and non-defense spending that has been in place since the sequester went into effect – the result was the low level of education investment described above. This coming year the sequester returns in full force, tightening the budget even further for both defense and non-defense programs. It is vital that the non-defense discretionary and defense caps be raised by an equal amount to ensure that we have the resources necessary to ensure security and opportunity for students, their families, and our nation.

As you put together the President's budget request we urge you to increase, not cut, the federal investment in education. We look forward to working with you and would be happy to be a resource to your staff on education funding.

Sincerely,



Jocelyn Bissonnette
President



Sheryl Cohen
Executive Director