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**FY 2018 Written Testimony for the Record  
March 8, 2017**

On behalf of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), we urge you to increase investments in education to an appropriate level in the fiscal year 2018 funding bill for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. 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 from early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, and higher education, to adult and workforce education including students, teachers and faculty, parents, administrators, specialized instructional support personnel, librarians, other school personnel, and school board members. CEF recommends that FY 2018 be the beginning of a glide path that increases investments in education to 5 percent of the federal budget.

Federal investments in education are critical for future economic growth, yet for several years education programs have been the targets of deep cuts. Congress has eliminated 50 education programs since 2010, and funding for the Department of Education is now below what it was in 2010, excluding the Pell

1800 M Street NW, 500 South Tower, Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 327-8125

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grant program. 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. 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.

Education spending is among the most cost effective investments the government can make, paying dividends for both the students themselves and the economy as a whole. Every \$1 invested in early childhood education saves at least \$7 in later societal costs and students who graduate from college earn more and have lower unemployment rates than those with just a high school degree. 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. Thus, federal investments in education not only improve access to high quality education for all students, but are also the foundation for a strong economy and a secure future.

We recognize 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.

The sequester returns in full force in fiscal year 2018, tightening the budget even further for both defense and non-defense programs. If Congress chooses to raise or eliminate the defense cap, it is vital that the non-defense discretionary cap 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.

To keep America strong and be prepared to compete in the global economy, we need to increase the federal investment in education.



Jocelyn Bissonnette  
President



Sheryl Cohen  
Executive Director