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March 27, 2019

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Committee for Education Funding

Dear Senate Budget Committee members:

On behalf of the more than 100 education organizations and institutions that are members of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), we write to oppose the fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget resolution proposed by Chairman Enzi because of the drastic cuts to education it would require.

The budget resolution slashes non-defense discretionary funding down to the sequester-level caps for FY 2020 and FY 2021, and then freezes funding at that very low level for the next three years. Those cuts are far deeper than those Congress rejected when it voted to raise caps every year after they went into effect in FY 2013. In addition to cutting discretionary spending, the budget resolution eliminates \$72 billion over five years in mandatory funding for education and social services programs, with half of that likely to be the funding that Congress has already enacted in law for Pell Grants and most of the rest likely to be cuts to student loans.

The tight budget constraints of recent years have left many education needs unfilled, and the deep cuts necessary to comply with this budget resolution would hurt America's students and teachers as well as our economy as a whole. While the Chairman's budget resolution does not include details on which education programs would be cut, it matches the total for non-defense discretionary funding in the President's budget, which cut the Department of Education by \$8.8 billion (12.5 percent) for FY 2020, imposing drastic cuts to vital services along the education continuum.

Federal education funding has stagnated over recent years despite the increasing demand as the nation's student body grows. The National Center for Education Statistics reports increasing enrollment in all elementary and secondary schools as well as in degree-granting post-secondary education. In recent years Congress has reauthorized both the nation's main elementary and secondary education law and the career education law, making a clear statement about the need to provide support in these areas, as well as others.

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While state and local governments provide the bulk of elementary and secondary education funding, federal investments play a key role along the education continuum. Unfortunately, net federal funding for the Department of Education declined for FY 2019 despite the bipartisan agreement to increase non-defense discretionary spending. In total, spending on education accounts for just 2 percent of the federal budget even though schools want to do more to meet the needs of all their students, costs make college unattainable to many, and graduates are now burdened by over \$1.3 trillion of student loan debt.

CEF, the nation's oldest and largest education coalition, is a non-partisan organization reflecting the entire education continuum, from early childhood education through elementary and secondary education to higher education, career and adult education, and out-of-school education needs and enhancements. Our members are teachers and school leaders, parents and students, counselors, school board members, universities and school districts, associations and others with the common goal of ensuring that education is adequately funded.

We urge you to reject the Chairman's budget resolution and instead support legislation to raise the non-defense discretionary caps for FY 2020 and FY 2021 to allow for continued investments above the 2019 levels, including an increased investment in education programs.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Giesecke  
President



Sheryl Cohen  
Executive Director