



May 3, 2017

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Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of more than 100 education institutions and organizations reflecting the broad spectrum of the education community, we want to express our views on the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2017. We acknowledge that the bill demonstrates the importance of federal investments in education across the continuum, from early childhood education and elementary and secondary education to higher education, as well as career and adult education and other education-related programs. We also appreciate that Congress completed the appropriations process, and funding is provided program by program, rather than through a continuing resolution that forfeits the ability to make necessary changes. However, we are disappointed funding for the Department of Education is cut by \$1.1 billion after accounting for rescissions and that funding is being provided so late in the fiscal year, making it incredibly difficult for schools, districts, and students to plan.

We recognize the challenge of crafting appropriations bills given the tight spending caps for fiscal year 2017. For this reason, CEF continues to strongly urge Congress to eliminate the austerity-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. If Congress allows the full sequester under the Budget Control Act to remain in force, the challenge of writing appropriations bills will worsen for fiscal year 2018, when the cap on non-defense discretionary appropriations is even lower than fiscal year 2017.

Investments in education strengthen our nation by creating a well-educated population prepared to compete in a rapidly changing world, yet education funding has been the target of deep cuts since January 2011 even though education funding accounts for only 2 percent of the federal budget. On the discretionary side of the budget, funding for programs for fiscal year 2017,

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exclusive of Pell grants, is almost \$1 billion below the level provided for fiscal year 2010. Many education programs are not funded sufficiently to fulfill their intended goals and meet student needs.

Educational attainment is strongly tied to both individual success and the nation's economic strength. Students and schools are counting on a strong federal education investment to ensure 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. In addition, students and schools are looking for help with the costs of critical educational services, such as special education. We 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