July 24 2023

Dear Representative:

We write on behalf of the more than 100 education organizations and institutions that are members of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) to strongly oppose the destructive education funding cuts in the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill approved by the Appropriations Subcommittee on July 14, and to urge you to vote against the bill unless the funding is restored. The bill cuts Department of Education funding by more than $22 billion (28 percent), providing less support than in 2006; in fact, it cuts Education funding to 36 percent below the 2006 level in inflation-adjusted dollars. The bill also cuts education-related programs in other agencies, eliminating entire programs that provide vital services to children and adults. These are devastating funding cuts that will impact teaching and learning along the education continuum, hitting early education, elementary and secondary education, higher education, job training, and out-of-school educational services.

The bill’s harmful funding cuts will hit education services immediately by rescinding $10.4 billion in already-enacted funding that school districts have built into their budgets for the academic year starting next month. This FY 2024 advance funding was intended for the coming school year, so eliminating it will immediately require laying off teachers and staff and reducing planned investments in other student supports. In addition to rescinding 14 percent of the Department’s entire discretionary budget, the bill slashes the amount of new FY 2024 education funding it provides. The cuts hit virtually all parts of the Education budget. For example, the combination of cuts reduces the Department’s largest K-12 education program by 80 percent (14.7 billion), eliminating vital support for 25 million students in nearly 90 percent of the nation’s school districts. The misguided and unnecessary cuts will eliminate support for all teacher training programs, reduce mental health services, dramatically cut student grant aid, and reduce funding for many other programs that constitute ongoing investments in students, families, and communities. These investments in education are needed now more than ever as students address learning losses, career development training, and child care needs that grew during the pandemic.

We recognize that the Fiscal Responsibility Act imposes tight discretionary spending constraints, but this bill cuts funding far more than is required by the Act’s funding levels and assumptions. We have seen what happened to student achievement and access to high quality education after the Budget Control Act of 2011 imposed spending caps for almost a decade; Education funding was cut and then held mostly
flat, and currently has not returned to the 2011 level in inflation-adjusted terms. This bill will further jeopardize access to necessary education services for another generation of students.

CEF urges House members to reject this bill and insist that the FY 2024 Labor-HHS-Education funding bill use all possible new funding sources and mechanisms to increase or at least maintain federal education investments. Recent polling shows that the majority of the public thinks that the government currently spends too little on education; this bill’s drastic funding cuts are a shift in the wrong direction, abandoning students and harming the economy.

CEF, the nation’s oldest and largest education coalition, is a non-partisan and non-profit organization reflecting the education continuum. Our members are parents and students, teachers and school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, school board members, universities and school districts, and associations working to ensure that education is adequately funded.

Sincerely,

Jenny Smulson    Sarah Abernathy
President    Executive Director