September 28, 2023

Dear Members of Congress:

We write on behalf of the more than 100 education organizations and institutions that are members of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) to urge Congress to pass legislation keeping the government funded at current levels to provide time to enact fiscal year (FY) 2024 appropriations bills that invest in education and meet the nation’s needs. CEF strongly opposes the destructive education funding cuts in the FY 2024 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill approved by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on July 14, and urges the House Appropriations Committee not to consider that bill unless the funding is restored.

Nothing is gained by allowing government funding to lapse, and in fact a government shutdown not only harms the economy as a whole, but it also hurts individuals and wastes federal funds as agencies must implement new procedures and, most likely, eventually provide backpay to federal workers who were sent home. Enacting a continuing resolution at current funding levels will provide Congress time to negotiate appropriations bills to fund necessary services for the next year.

We recognize that the Fiscal Responsibility Act imposes tight discretionary spending constraints that preclude investing in education at the level the President had requested before that bipartisan law was enacted. Those constraints led the Senate Appropriations Committee to produce a bipartisan FY 2024 Labor-HHS-Education bill that maintains education funding at about the current level. The bill is not ideal because it cuts some education funding that we urge be restored, but it shows a bipartisan compromise on education funding is possible.

In contrast, the House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee’s FY 2024 bill cuts Department of Education funding by more than $22 billion, to below the 2006 level. 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.

Education funding was cut for years after the Budget Control Act of 2011 imposed spending caps for almost a decade. Education funding still has not returned to the 2011 level in inflation-adjusted terms, and recent polling confirms that the majority of the public thinks that the government currently spends too little on education. CEF urges Congress to act to keep the government funded at current levels so it can use all possible funding sources and mechanisms to increase or at least maintain federal education investments for FY 2024.

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, associations, and others working to ensure that education is adequately funded.

Sincerely,

Jenny Smulson  
President

Sarah Abernathy  
Executive Director