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November 13, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

Ensuring a well-educated populace is an essential component of a functioning democracy, and vital contributor to our economic growth, a strong national defense, and an internationally competitive workforce. Data show that educational outcomes improve when schools are adequately funded and when higher education is affordable and accessible to all who want to pursue it. As you know, in the United States more than 90 percent of elementary and secondary students attend public school, and in higher education, federal investments make college a possibility for about 80 percent of students in the U.S., according to the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. Overall, the federal investments in education show clear returns: people with more education have higher employment rates, earn dramatically more over their lifetime, pay more in taxes, and have lower reliance on social welfare programs, among other beneficial outcomes. In fact, the World Bank estimates that investing in an extra year of education has a 9 percent average return globally – a far better return than most other investments can show.

As the nation's oldest and largest education coalition, the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) is writing to work with the Administration to ensure that education is adequately funded in the fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget. CEF is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that reflects the broad continuum of the education community. Our 112 member organizations and institutions represent early learning, elementary and secondary education, higher education, career and technical education, adult education and workforce development, and education enhancements; our members include students, teachers and faculty, parents, administrators, counselors, other school

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employees, librarians, school board members, and trustees from both the public and private sectors.

Federal education funding has stagnated over recent years despite the increasing demand as the nation's student body grows. NCES reports increasing enrollment in all elementary and secondary schools as well as in degree-granting post-secondary education. That growth is forecast to continue through at least 2026, the end of NCES's current projection. 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. 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, new 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 of their students, costs make college unattainable to many, and graduates are now burdened by \$1.3 trillion of student loan debt.

The sequester-level discretionary spending caps for FY 2020 would require unrealistically deep and harmful cuts to both the non-defense and defense budgets, cuts far deeper than those Congress rejected when it voted to raise caps every year after they went into effect in FY 2013. Therefore, CEF urges the Administration to partner with Congress in raising the FY 2020 austerity-level cap on non-defense discretionary spending to allow for continued investments above the 2019 levels. CEF also urges that the President's budget request reflect Congress's priority on education funding and that it increases, not cuts, the federal investment in education. We look forward to working with you and would be happy to be a resource to your staff on education funding.

Sincerely,



Jeff Carter
President



Sheryl Cohen
Executive Director