COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION FUNDING

November 28, 2017

Dear Members of Congress:

As the 114 national education organizations and institutions who are members of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), we are deeply concerned that legislation – such as the current tax reform proposals – that dramatically lowers governmental receipts will lead to large scale cuts to non-defense programs to help offset the cost. Specifically, we are concerned with the threat such legislation poses to future federal investments in education. CEF, the nation's oldest and largest education coalition, is a non-partisan organization reflecting the continuum of the education community that advocates on behalf of increasing federal investments in education. These education investments are among the best ways to reduce the deficit because the result of those investments is a well-educated populace, which translates to a strong workforce, economic growth, and a globally competitive nation.

History has demonstrated that tax cuts that are not paid for create pressure for Congress to address the resulting deficit impact, to which Congress has responded by cutting non-defense spending. The most recent example is the Budget Control Act of 2011, which first capped discretionary spending and then further reduced spending through sequestration, cutting discretionary and mandatory education spending at a time when it was sorely needed. Due in part to these austerity-level caps, the U.S. still currently spends only two cents of every federal dollar on education, and funding for the Department of Education discretionary programs in 2017 is still below what it was in 2010, excluding the Pell Grant program.

In fact, if Congress enacts revenue or direct spending legislation that worsens the deficit, the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go-Act triggers automatic sequestration of certain direct spending programs at the end of the year to offset the impact. Passage of the current tax reform proposal will trigger these additional sequester cuts that will entirely eliminate crucial programs,

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including the Department of Education's vocational rehabilitation state grant program. In addition, the automatic sequester will also double the origination fees on student loans, increasing student debt and making college more expensive for borrowers.

We urge you to keep in mind the impact that voting to lower revenues – and thus increasing pressure to cut spending – will have on education for America's students, families, schools, and institutions. Educational attainment is inextricably tied to both individual success and the nation's economic strength. The nation's students are counting on strong federal education investments to ensure equitable 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. Instead of enacting legislation that will lead to further cuts to vital education programs, we recommend you support a fiscal approach that allows for greater, necessary investments in education for fiscal year 2018 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Bissonnette
President

Sheryl Cohen
Executive Director