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Joel Packer,
Executive Director
Committee for Education Funding

November 24, 2010

Dear Senator,

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 85 education associations and institutions from preschool to postgraduate education, strongly urges you to not freeze funding for critical education programs through a Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year (FY) 11, but to instead complete action through an omnibus appropriations bill.

The FY 11 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill as reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee provides \$2.8 billion in increased funding for a range of important education programs. These include Title I, IDEA grants to states and Part C grants for Infants and Families, School Improvement Grants, the high school graduation initiative, Striving Readers, Impact Aid, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Education for Homeless Children, State assessment grants, School Leadership, English Language Acquisition grants, Adult Education State grants, higher education Teacher Quality Partnership grants, TRIO, education research and statistics, statewide data systems, Head Start and \$300 million for the new Early Learning Challenge Fund, while also providing funding for recent initiatives such as Race To The Top, Investing in Innovation, and Promise Neighborhoods.

These funds are urgently needed to continue progress on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing high school graduation, postsecondary education attendance and completion rates.

FY 11 federal education funds are generally for use in the 2011-12 school year. At that time, schools and colleges will be faced with both the termination of ARRA funds and deep cuts in state aid due to unprecedented and growing state budget gaps. This will mean that schools and colleges will face substantial cuts and layoffs at all levels of education.

CEF also strongly urges you to provide \$5.667 billion to pay off the Pell Grant funding shortfall to prevent nine million college students from having their grants reduced, thus reducing access to postsecondary education.

As the economy has struggled, more students with greater need have become eligible for Pell Grants, resulting in an accumulated shortfall of \$5.667 billion. Without addressing this shortfall, the Fiscal Year 2011 maximum award of \$5,550 will likely be slashed by at least \$845, or more than 15 percent, undermining the commitment recently made by Congress to our nation's students.

Failure to pay off the Pell Grant shortfall may also result in devastating cuts for all other education programs, due to stringent aggregate spending caps.

One of the best ways to improve our economic situation and global competitiveness is through investments in education. The co-chairs of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform in their recent plan to reduce the long-term debt and deficit stated that the Congress should "Invest in education, infrastructure, and high-value R&D" in order to "Promote Economic Growth and Keep America Competitive."

For the sake of our schools, colleges and students, as well as America's future, please do not freeze education programs at last year's levels.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Fansmith
President



Joel Packer
Executive Director