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Joel Packer,
Executive Director
Committee for Education Funding

December 10, 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 invest in education programs by passing an omnibus appropriations bill, instead of freezing funding for critical education programs through a Fiscal Year (FY) 11 Continuing Resolution. The worst option for education would be another short-term CR.

While the House-passed CR (HR 3082) includes \$5.7 billion to pay off the Pell grant shortfall (strongly supported by CEF to prevent nine million college students from having their grants reduced) and also includes \$550 million for Race To The Top and a \$314 million increase for Head Start, it freezes funding for all other education programs at FY 10 levels and eliminates funding for several education programs such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Writing Project and Reading is Fundamental.

By contrast, the FY 11 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee provides \$2.8 billion in increased funding for a range of important education programs as well as \$990 million for Head Start. 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, 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 in an omnibus to continue progress on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing high school graduation, postsecondary education attendance and completion rates.

Schools and colleges are facing both the termination of ARRA funds and deep cuts in state aid due to unprecedented and growing state budget gaps, that will result in substantial reductions and layoffs at all levels of education.

In addition, 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.

One of the best ways to improve our economic situation and global competitiveness is through investments in education. The report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform states, "...we must invest in education, infrastructure, and high-value research and development to help our economy grow, keep us globally competitive, and make it easier for businesses to create jobs."

CEF is also strongly opposed to another short-term CR. States, schools, colleges, and students need certainty in how much money will be available for the next school year to plan their budgets and make personnel and program decisions. We are very concerned that a short-term CR would also likely eliminate the Pell grant funds and targeted increases included in the House-passed year-long CR, and lead to deep cuts in the next Congress.

For the sake of our schools, colleges and students, as well as America's future, please provide needed investments in education through an omnibus bill, instead of shortchanging education by freezing education programs at last year's levels.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Fansmith
President



Joel Packer
Executive Director