

June *, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The *** undersigned organizations – representing the full range of stakeholders supporting the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill – thank you for enacting vital COVID-19 relief that continues to help families and communities recover from the pandemic. We ask you to build on those investments by supporting the President’s requests for historic funding increases for fiscal year (FY) 2022 and for new investments in these areas as part of the Build Back Better agenda. FY 2022 is the first chance after almost a decade under statutory discretionary spending caps for Congress to set total discretionary funding based on the nation’s needs and not on an arbitrary formula. We urge you to capitalize on this opportunity to increase the allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee by at least the amount necessary to accommodate the President’s requested funding increases.

The programs and services funded by the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee have a profound impact on health and well-being, child development, educational and skills attainment, and productivity, yet they have been shortchanged in the appropriations process over the last decade. The bill has lost more than \$20 billion in purchasing power over the last decade; it would take an allocation of \$204 billion just to return to the FY 2010 level in inflation-adjusted dollars. Even in years when non-defense discretionary funding increased, the Subcommittee’s allocation remained flat or received only a small share of the increase although it is the largest non-defense bill. As a result, the Labor-HHS-Education bill has received a declining share of all non-defense funding, leaving important services and activities underfunded by billions of dollars.

The COVID-19 emergency funding Congress enacted is helping to address the new costs and needs caused by the pandemic on a short-term basis. Congress must now use the FY 2022 Labor-HHS-Education bill, infrastructure legislation, and other investments to provide sustained funding to address long-standing needs that existed before the pandemic and that have been worsened by the resulting recession and disruption to income and activities. The programs in the Labor-HHS-Education bill strengthen the nation by improving Americans’ lives and meeting basic needs for a broad range of constituencies. The effects of chronic underfunding have impacted programs that support education, public health, health research, job training, and social services. The effects include:

- Serving 1.5 million fewer low-income people through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in 2018 than in 2010, despite growing need, because funding was reduced from \$5.1 billion to \$3.7 billion over this period (and cut [38 percent](#) from FY 2010 to FY 2020, adjusted for inflation).

- Eroding the public health infrastructure and workforce, limiting our ability to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and monitor ongoing health trends for new and emerging threats.
- Hindering efforts to raise overall student achievement, close troubling achievement gaps, and increase high school graduation rates, college affordability, and college completion.
- Leaving far too many low-income children without access to high quality preschool and other early learning opportunities.
- Providing child care to only one in six eligible children, with child care providers paid too little.
- Hindering people's access to the skills, training, and education necessary to fill jobs at the backbone of our economy and businesses' efforts to fill the jobs of the 21st Century, especially for the more than 40% of workers who are unemployed who lack access to critical education and training after high school necessary to succeed in jobs created under Build Back Better and economic recovery plans.
- Preventing almost one million people from accessing the critical workforce and job training services that Congress overwhelmingly authorized in 2014. The U.S. invests less than every other industrialized country in active labor market policy, except for Mexico, and would need to invest \$80 billion annually just to reach the median of our international peers.
- Ignoring the needs of individuals who find themselves without a high school credential and who need a pathway back to education, employment, and active citizenship.
- Providing inadequate resources to deal with the substance use disorder crisis.
- Failing to keep pace with growing child welfare needs, especially as communities grapple with the destructive impact of substance use disorders on families. Child welfare services funding, for example, was cut more than [20 percent](#) from FY 2010 to FY 2020.

Without a substantial increase in the Subcommittee's allocation, it will be impossible to support the President's request for new investments in important initiatives such as: public health emergency preparedness and infectious disease surveillance; targeting efforts to reduce maternal mortality rates among women of color; overcoming disruptions in learning disproportionately affecting students of color, with disabilities, and with low incomes; continuing to improve college affordability and completion; responding to the opioid epidemic; improving mental health services; and achieving the intended innovation of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

We urge you to commit to improving the lives of Americans by significantly boosting the allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education bill for FY 2022 at least to match the President's request in order to provide needed services for the American public. If you have questions about this letter, please contact:

- Sarah Abernathy, Committee for Education Funding (abernathy@cef.org);
- Erin Will Morton, Coalition for Health Funding (emorton@dc-crd.com);
- Katie Spiker, Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce (KatieS@nationalskillscoalition.org); or
- Deborah Weinstein, Coalition on Human Needs (dweinstein@chn.org).

Sincerely,

Cc: Chairs and Ranking Members, House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittees