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FY 2026 Outside Witness Testimony submitted by the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), from executive director Sarah Abernathy and Steve Voytek, Advance CTE federal policy advisor and 2025 CEF president

Prepared for the Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, supporting education funding

June 12, 2025

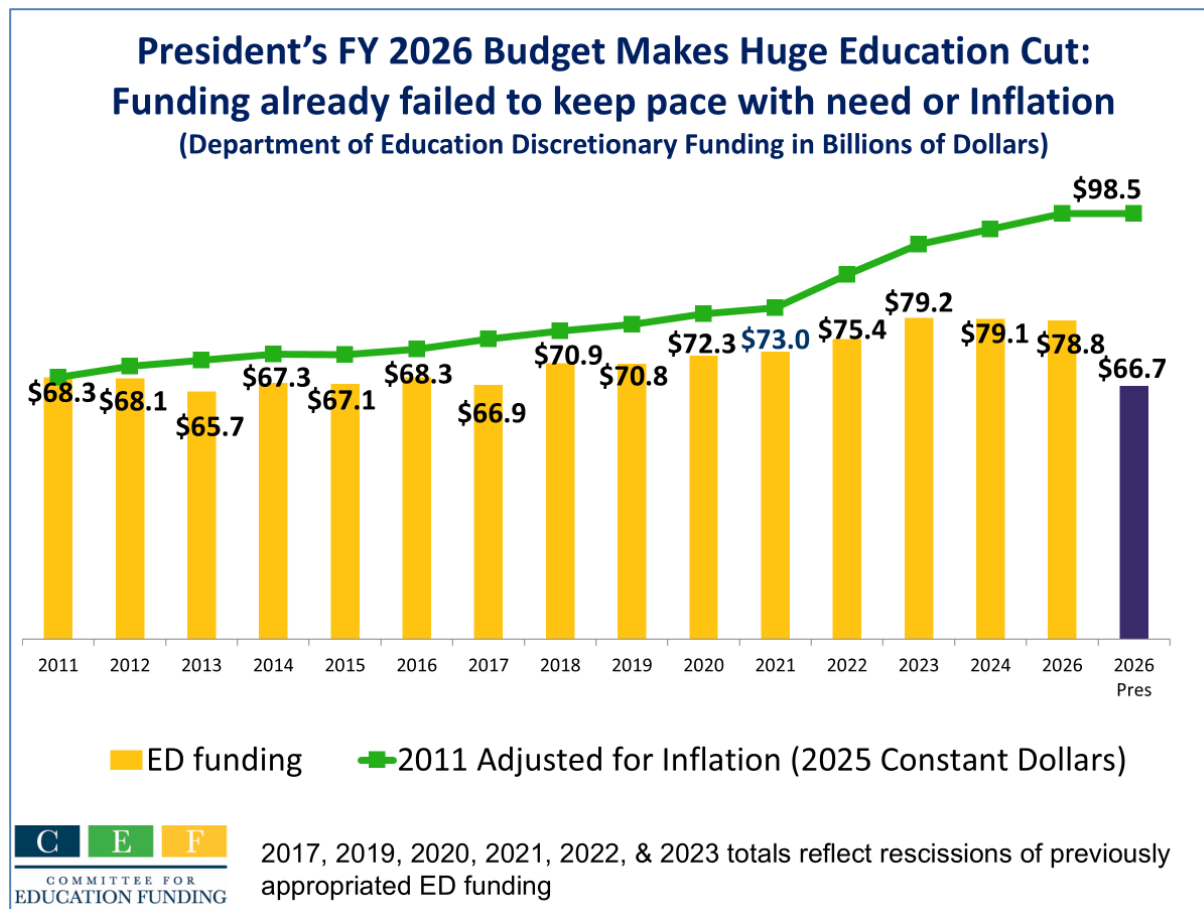
On behalf of the [Committee for Education Funding \(CEF\)](https://www.cef.org), we urge you to increase appropriations for education-related programs under the purview of the Department of Education (ED) and other federal agencies in the fiscal year 2026 appropriations bill for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. Specifically, we call on Congress to restore funding to at least FY 2023 levels of investment. Funding for ED has been cut in FY 2024 and in FY 2025 to a level that, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is \$20 billion less than what was provided for education 15 years ago. The President's FY 2026 budget would cut support for education even deeper, proposing to drastically disinvest in students and schools as shown in the chart on the following page. The Administration's harmful cuts would affect preschoolers, students in elementary and secondary school, teachers and school leaders, adults who seek education and job training, Americans who rely on federal aid to go to college, and much more. We urge you to reject the Administration's proposed cuts to education funding, which do not provide sufficient resources to support critical state and local educational priorities.

The erosion of the federal education investment is being exacerbated by the Administration's unilateral actions to withhold or cancel funding legally authorized and enacted by Congress. There also remains enormous uncertainty regarding whether and when the Administration will release funding Congress has enacted for FY 2025. Federal support for higher education and for low-income students and families would also be deeply cut if Congress enacts the House-passed reconciliation bill, which limits

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eligibility for Pell grants, eliminates some student loan programs, makes it more costly for many borrowers to repay their loans, raises costs for some institutions of higher education, and cuts Medicaid, which helps support school services for low-income students and is the fourth largest source of funding support for schools nationwide.



We urge Congress to reject the Administration's proposed funding cuts and instead make a down payment towards meeting educational needs that span the entire continuum, and to ensure that the Department of Education and other agencies remain in place to provide vital oversight and technical assistance and faithfully implement the funding Congress enacts. The American public [supports more education funding](#), not less. While federal investments in education fuel learning and are essential to our nation's continued success, they account for only about 2 percent of the federal budget. Investments in education are among the best the country can make, reaping rewards immediately in terms of student achievement and knowledge, and over the long term in greater economic output, community engagement, and a well-informed populace prepared for a global economic environment. Indeed, higher education is [America's eighth largest export](#), contributing \$50 billion annually to the nation's economy.

- **Public schools are key to local economies;** in [many communities, schools are the largest employer](#).

- The more than [7.4 million unfilled jobs](#) in America could move overseas if the US does not graduate students with 21st century skills and knowledge needed for success in today's rapidly transforming global economy.
- [Wages and employment rates increase](#) with more years of education, and higher wages lead to more tax revenue that boosts the economy.
- [A strong military](#) depends on investments in science, technology, engineering, math, and other disciplines.
- [Higher investments in public schools lead to less adult crime](#), also saving future public costs.

Education is one of the few policy areas where investment directly translates into economic mobility and long-term growth. Cutting education is not fiscal responsibility – it is a generational mistake.

CEF, the nation's oldest and largest education coalition, is a non-partisan, non-profit organization reflecting the education continuum. Our members are parents and students, teachers and school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, school board members, universities and school districts, and associations with the common goal of ensuring that education is adequately funded.



Steve Voytek
President

Sincerely,



Sarah Abernathy
Executive Director