

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader, The House
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2017

On behalf of the undersigned organizations of the Title IV-A Coalition, we urge you to raise the sequester-level discretionary caps and ensure that any increases in the Defense spending caps are matched with equal increases in the Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) spending caps. Congress recognized the inability to make necessary investments in domestic programs under the current caps, and therefore raised the caps on defense and NDD funding by equal amounts for the last four years.

We call on Congress to eliminate the sequestration caps in order to make critical investments in education programs such as the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grant Program under Title IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which supports well-rounded programs, safe and healthy schools, and the effective use of technology. If the spending caps are not raised, non-defense discretionary spending will be cut by \$3 billion in nominal terms and by \$16 billion in inflation-adjusted terms. In addition, the House lowered that tight level by another \$5 billion in its omnibus funding bill, leading to harmful cuts to and the severe underfunding of important education programs.

The SSAE grant program, authorized at \$1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018 (FY 2018), is the result of Congress' decision to consolidate more than 20 existing programs, most of which were competitive, into a single formula-funded flexible block grant program that has the potential to benefit millions of students by allowing districts to choose how to spend their dollars to support safe and healthy schools, well-rounded education, and the effective use of technology. The critical education programs meant to be supported by SSAE funds include: 1) safe and healthy students activities, such as providing mental health services to students; 2) increasing student access to STEM, computer science and accelerated learning courses, physical education, the arts, music, foreign languages, and college and career counseling; funds for an effective school library program; and, 3) providing students with access to technology and digital materials and educators with technology professional development opportunities.

We strongly urge Congress to fully fund the SSAE program in FY 2018, as the FY 2017 allocation of only \$400 million is wholly inadequate to provide the flexibility at the local level or to run the program as Congress intended. Funding this program at less than 25% of its authorized level in its first year has already presented serious implementation issues, including the need to allow states to allocate funds to districts competitively, contrary to what is authorized in ESSA. The promise of ESSA

to provide states and local districts with flexibility to make meaningful investments in programs including computer science, AP, music and the arts, mental health services, and professional development for technology has been severely hindered due to Congress' failure to provide adequate funding for this program in its first year.

Congress must do better by our nation's schools, educators, and most importantly, our students. We strongly urge Congress to repeal the Budget Control Act sequester-level caps and significantly increase funding for the SSAE grant program under Title IV-A of ESSA.

Sincerely,

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Afterschool Alliance

Alliance for Excellent Education

American Association of School Librarians

American Camp Association

American College of Sports Medicine

American Council for School Social Work

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

American Dance Therapy Association

American Heart Association

American Library Association

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychological Association

American School Counselor Association

American Society for Engineering Education

ASCD

Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Building Engineering & Science Talent

Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools

Coalition for Community Schools

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

College in High School Alliance

Committee for Children

Communities In Schools

CoSN

Futures Without Violence
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Health and Education Alliance of Louisiana (HEAL)
Healthy Schools Campaign
Healthy Schools Network
International Society for Technology in Education
Jobs for the Future
League of American Orchestras
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Lions Clubs International
National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP)
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Music Education (NAfME)
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASPP)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Center for Technological Literacy at the Museum of Science, Boston
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National PTA
National School Boards Association
National Science Teachers Association
National Summer Learning Association
Oregon Computer Science Teachers Association
Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Save the children
School Social Work Association of America
SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators
Society for Public Health Education
Society of Women Engineers
Software & Information Industry Association
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
The American Counseling Association

The College Board

The Corps Network

The Joyful Child Foundation

Trust for America's Health