Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Mikulski, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

As Congress continues its work to finalize appropriations for fiscal year 2016, we—as organizations that see the substantial impact that principals and school leaders have in strengthening schools—urge you to continue critical funding for the School Leadership Program (SLP).

As the only currently funded, federal program dedicated specifically to strengthening school leadership, SLP provides high-poverty school districts with critical support in their efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain transformational school leaders. Continued support for this program is essential because dynamic leaders help create positive school environments, increase the retention of highly-skilled teachers, and have an outsized effect on student achievement.

Research shows—and our experience confirms—the tremendous importance of strong school leadership, especially in underperforming schools. Ninety-seven percent of teachers list school leadership as essential or very important for their career choices, and principals account for fully one quarter of a school’s effect on student achievement; a highly effective principal can increase student achievement by as much as 20 percentage points.

Eliminating funding for SLP would halt the tremendous progress that has been made in developing and implementing best practices to attract talented educators and provide them with critical support in their efforts to create school environments where teachers love to teach and students love to learn. In doing so, it would deny hundreds of thousands of students the opportunity to learn in a school where the leadership has the tools to help them maximize their achievement.

Given the undeniable importance of school leaders, we urge you to continue funding for SLP, at or above FY15 levels, in any final appropriations bill, ensuring that school leaders have access to the development opportunities and supports that enable them to drive positive change for students and teachers.

Sincerely,
American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)
America Forward
Bloomington Public Schools District 87
California League of Middle Schools
Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University
Deans for Impact
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Old Dominion University
Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement
Leading to Learn
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY)
New Leaders
Project LEADER, Universidad del Este, Puerto Rico
Public Impact
Region 5 Education Service Center School Leadership Program
School Leadership Preparation and Development Network (SLPDN)
Teach For America
Teach Plus
The VIVA Project
Quincy Public School District 172