

October 26, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman, United States Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
Room S128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairman, United States Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
Room S128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman  
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Appropriations  
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member  
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Appropriations  
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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 outsize 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